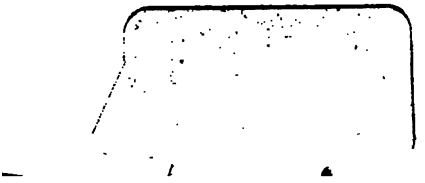

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Introduction to the Study of English Literature

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From the Earliest Times to the Close of The Victorian Age

By

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PREFACE

THE study of literature is, rightly, a pursuit in which the faculties are liberated and disciplined by the freshness and variety of imaginative experience, and are made strong and supple so that they learn to enjoy the pleasure of their own activity. The following pages attempt to present the outlines of English literature in accordance with this ideal. The book is offered as a companion to studies, not as a short cut to a superficial and specious knowledge of the classics of our language. It does not seek to pronounce any final criticism, or to dictate on matters of judgment or taste; for these are the greatest disservices a teacher can render to a student. Its intention is, rather, to prospect in company with the reader, to unearth and investigate clues with him, to lure his curiosity, and to challenge him to thought. The student will eventually discover that certain periods or writers are more to his taste than others; he will require, above all, bibliographical guidance. This he will find in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, to which this *Primer* may serve as an introduction.

I am under a debt of obligation to Professor Elton, who read through the proofs of the book, and also to Professor P. G. Thomas, who generously revised the medieval section in minute detail. But I must accept the responsibility for the final form of the statements in the book throughout.

W. T. Y.

August, 1913.

CONTENTS

It may be well to explain that the division into prose and verse in each period is fairly rigidly maintained. If this seems sometimes to disperse the work of one writer under several headings, there are compensations for this disadvantage, and the disadvantage is minimised almost to extinction by the index.

Introduction to the Study of English Literature

BOOK I

OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST

I. Poetry

The pagan verse

The earliest poem still extant in the English speech is *Widsith*, "the far-traveller," recording the journeyings of an imaginary singer among the Teutonic tribes of the continent in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. It gives us an outline, which we may fill in with detail from other poems, such as *Deor's Lament* and *Beowulf*, of the place of the "scop," or king's harper and remembrancer, in the social fabric of our ancestors. He appears as the honoured companion of kings, the recorder of heroic exploits, the memoriser of lays and stories of the past, which he chanted in the meadhall after the hunt or the battle. These lays developed, in time, by the passage from

mouth to mouth, and, no doubt, by the finer artistic skill of some individual "scop," into epic poetry. This may be the evolutionary history of the early English epic *Beowulf*, shaped from pre-Christian lays in Northumberland in the eighth century, though the only MS. existing is in a dialect of King Alfred's time. *Beowulf* may interest us in various ways: as a story; as a picture of a social system; as a repository of fragments of other Teutonic epics; and as an example of heroic style. Its three thousand lines tell, with many digressions, the life story of Beowulf, who sails from his native Gautland in Sweden to the succour of Hrothgar, a king in Zealand, because his Hall Heorot is being ravaged by Grendel, such a monster as vivid imaginations might suppose to inhabit the damp and gloomy forests behind the sea-board. Beowulf, who has the strength of thirty men, tears an arm from the monster and drives the fiend to its lair. Attacks are resumed by Grendel's mother, and Beowulf achieves a second hard-won victory in a cave beneath a lake, powerfully described by the poet. Thus, peace is restored to Heorot, and Beowulf returns to Gautland to become, after many years, its trusted and honoured king. He engages, finally, in a third conflict, with a dragon, keeper of a buried treasure (a common feature of Teutonic stories), in defence of his own hall and country. By the aid of his shield-bearer, Wiglaf, he is victorious, but at the cost of his life. The poem ends with a eulogy of his justice and valour by his thegns over the mound where his ashes are buried.

Beowulf

In all probability, these three splendid fights are based on a myth, or on some folktale, adapted to the

hero's story. But we can discern behind these events a strongly marked social economy, at its head the king, round him the thegns, and, more dimly seen, the lower ranks or ceorls. It is a life lived, like the Homeric, in the open, with little enough privacy; and the poetry is a poetry of action, devoid of subtleties of thought and feeling, a record of things done. Hunting, feasting, voyages, warfare, savage, and sometimes treacherous, feud, are the chief concerns. There is much about the ocean and ships, but no feeling of affection for the sea, rather the pride of conquest, as in Beowulf's swimming match. Strength, daring, and the instinct for command are the most approved qualities, though the hero himself has many gentler traits, and, in a rugged way, is conscious of the lack of wife and children. There are references to institutions like the king's body companions, were-gild or blood-money, the nightly feast in the meadhall, with the gracious figure of the queen, held in highest reverence, pouring out the mead, and bestowing gifts, collar, armlet, and mantle upon the hero. Then, benches are pushed aside, bolsters are spread, and the thegns sleep with arms at hand. Many arts have developed; the Hall Heorot is finely ornamented with gold, rich in famous swords and trophies of adventure, hung with embroidered tapestry; people are skilled in fashioning war-gear, ringed mail, and boar-crested helmets; and the art of song is almost universal. They have no humour except that of grim challenge and competitive boasting—a common national trait, not to be judged by our standards. The religious feeling of the poem is, as it were, in two strata, pagan and Christian. The

characters submit unprotestingly to "wyrd," or fate; and there is both melancholy and dignity in this fatalism, which never condones dishonour. "Death is better for every warrior than a life of infamy," is Beowulf's standard. The customs and rites, too, are heathen throughout. But the sentiment and reflection are largely Christian; King Hrothgar, for instance, speaks warningly of pride of strength and possessions. We are forced to conclude, therefore, that the poem was still in the process of making when it passed to minstrels who had been influenced by Christianity.

This full, well-ordered life, this grave discourse, these courtly manners, this long-practised art of epic poetry—for it must have taken centuries to perfect the verse-form and establish the current synonyms for hero, sword, sea, ship, and the like—show us that we are viewing the advanced civilisation of a race with a great and varied history, the Germania, in fact, of Tacitus. The poem, also, is the repository of fragments of other sagas. We hear of Scyld, a Dane; of Sigemund, father of Sigurd the Volsung; of another Beowulf, a Dane; of Finn, a Frisian, who has some relation with another Old English poem, *The Fight at Finnsburh*, describing a typical fierce onset, with the ringing clash of separate blows, by small bodies of men in a tight corner. *Beowulf* is evidently but a fragment of the great northern *corpus* of stories which includes the *Nibelungenlied*, and the tales told in magnificent narrative prose in the Icelandic sagas. The racial tradition, the dignity and valour of the hero, and the style give the poem an epic rank, which its mere story, as it exists to-day, would not win for it. It is written in Old English alliterative measure, in

which the rhythm depends upon accent; the line is divided into two parts, each containing two main accents. These accents must fall on the emphatic words in the sentence; as a general, but not quite invariable, rule, two of these accented syllables in the first part, and one in the second part, of the line are alliterated, that is, they begin with the same letter (in the case of vowels, any vowel may be supposed to give alliteration with any other). The number of unaccented syllables is indifferent so long as they do not put too large a strain upon the normal rhythm. A line with so much freedom as this adapts itself readily to the poet's moods and purposes; landscape, battle, description of valiant exploits, and elegiac meditation are equally well expressed in this vigorous and flexible measure; the style of the poem, in fact, often seems to be greater than its matter. There are few complete similes in the Homeric manner, but the diction is essentially figurative, and some of these figures become picturesque conventions; the sea is the whale-path; a ship, the foamy-necked one; the king, a gift-bestower; an arrow, a war-adder. Furthermore, there is a tendency to excessive use of apposition, which, together with a deficiency of particles, makes the story, however vigorously told, move slowly.

With this early poetry must be classed some short charms or pagan incantations for such occasions as bewitched land or stolen cattle; and of finer quality are five elegiac lyrics, the most original of all Old English poetry. In *The Wanderer*, the person spoken of, bereft by destiny of his chief and comrades, seeks to evade the bitter com-

Lyric

panionship of sorrow; a dream restores a momentary vision of joy, but, soon, the solitary poet awakens to realise that man is at the mercy of night, storm, winter, and mortality. *The Ruin* is a picture of a town (possibly a Roman settlement, such as Bath) laid waste by violence and time; the poet conjures up in imagination its towers, pinnacles, courts, its flowing springs, and halls filled with the mirth of warriors; these, he contrasts with the ruined masonry, fallen gates, and frost-bespangled lime. *The Seafarer* describes, perhaps in a dialogue, the emotion and fascination of a sailor, lured to the bitter and lonely sea again, in spite of its peril and hardship. *The Lover's Message* and *The Wife's Complaint* are the only Old English verse based on the theme of love; the former is a message carried by a wooden tablet, recalling old affections and bidding the one addressed to join the sender beyond the sea; the latter, the plaint of a woman falsely accused and banished, is full of the despair of separation.

This group of poems, evidently the mere wreckage of a great literature, is decisively pagan in origin; but the Christian elements are intimately fused; there is a kind of compromise between the old and new beliefs. The pagan system of society, art, and morals out of which the poems arose suffered three successive shocks from the southern world of Roman culture and religion. The first, at the conversion by St. Augustine (though Irish missionaries from Iona had been long at work, and Whitby was a Celtic monastery). The second, at the accession of the scholar-king Alfred. The third, at the Norman conquest. What is left of Old English poetry enables us to mark the encroach-

ment, at first very gradual, of Christianity upon pagan feeling.

Before the Christian spirit was fully manifested in literature, the Church had been established a hundred years. Most Old English poetry was written in the dialect of Northumbria, though preserved for us in the dialect of Saxon Wessex; for Northumbrian civilisation, with its libraries at Jarrow, where Bede dwelt, and at Whitby, was the centre of European culture for a century, and Charles the Great found there his educational Adviser, Alcuin, just before it was destroyed by Danish invasions.

The Christianised verse

Only two names (one of them, Cynewulf, doubtfully authentic) can be assigned as authors of the Biblical verse of Northumbria, Cædmon and Cynewulf. There is a well-known story, told by the Venerable Bede, of how, at Whitby, Cædmon the neatherd, who had not the gift of song, was suddenly inspired to sing about the creation; the song Bede attributes to him is closely parallel to the opening of the poem *Genesis*, which, with *Exodus*, *Crist and Satan*, and *Daniel*, forms the school of Cædmon. *Genesis*, to which the picture of Satan's torments in *Paradise Lost* may be indebted, has two parts, divergent in style, *A* and *B*. *A* is a paraphrase of the scriptural text, with expansions of the warlike episodes and the flood; *B*, the finer part, records again the fall of the angels. *Exodus* is a forceful description of the disaster of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. *Crist and Satan* gives one of several pictures in Old English of the harrowing of hell.

Cædmon

In this way, the Christian religion first found its

lodgment in Old English verse; from the Bible were eagerly taken certain stories, especially those animated by a spirit akin to the existing heroic lays; the grim, primitive pugnacity common both to Hebrews of the Old Testament and to our forefathers makes possible such an association of poetry with the sacred book of Christianity as we may see in *Genesis* and *Exodus*.

Cynewulf

The later school of Cynewulf, who is supposed to have signed his name in runic characters in *Crist*, *Juliana*, *Fates of the Apostles*, and *Elene*, is also responsible for *Andreas*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Guthlac*, and *The Phœnix*. The titles of the poems are indicative of the change in the choice of material; in place of the more ferocious themes of the Old Testament, we find here stories of the New Testament, of saints' lives and of the martyrology; the mystical introspective spirit of Christianity is reflected in them and the pictures of landscape and seascape are gentler. They have, at the same time, a more polished art, though this may seem to be at the cost of the rude vigour of their predecessors. *Andreas*, the story of a voyage of the apostle Andrew to rescue St. Matthew, contains a sublime description of storm; *Elene* tells of the finding of the true cross by Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine; its descriptions of the sea and of the embarking hosts close with the poet's conversion and adoration of the cross, a theme dealt with in the dramatic though brief *Dream of the Rood*. The cross speaks with subtle and passionate emotion of the agony it shared with the young hero Christ. *Guthlac* is a martyr's conflict with fiends. *The Phœnix* is the most inventive creation of the school,

giving to the legend an allegorical significance and a background of exquisite natural and mystical beauty in the sinless land. Some of the *Riddles*, with their finely descriptive effects, may be by Cynewulf. The remaining verse includes a *Physiologus*, which is concerned with the animal symbolism of the art of the catacombs, and a dialogue, *Salomon and Saturn*.

Reviewing the poems of the two schools, all written in the alliterative measure, we may see that religious innovations are more vital in the Cynewulfian group; in the Cædmonian, only the matter—the narrative of the *Pentateuch* and the book of *Daniel*—is given from without: the working up is by a poet similar in temper to the composer of *Beowulf*, and everything is translated into terms of the viking heroic age. The Cynewulfian poets, dealing with the contrasted matter of the gospels, remote from pagan sentiment, bring to its treatment a gentler spirit, though they still use some of the phrases of *Beowulf*. The Cædmonian hero wars with his foes and with the sea for fame, admitting no master but fate, and finding battle the necessary outlet for a natural instinct in him; the instinct did not die out of Old English life, for we find it in full activity in the war poetry of the *Chronicle* in the tenth century. The Cynewulfian hero, whether Christ or the saint, battles with fiends or with persecution or with torments for the sake of his fellows and for the glory of God. Thus is indicated the passage into a new world; from the civilisation which lies at the back of *Beowulf* and Old Norse verse, the Icelandic sagas, and the Old German epic to the civilisation of Latin Christianity.

2. Old English Prose

We may first name briefly writers in Latin: Gildas, author of *The Destruction of Britain;* the shadowy Nennius, a historian; Bishop Aldhelm; the Venerable Bede; and Alcuin, who, in 792, went to serve Charles the Great. Bede lived at Jarrow from 672–735, and wrote numerous scientific and theological manuals, all overshadowed by his *Ecclesiastical History of the English Race*, 731. Its five books cover the period from the invasion of Cæsar to the year 731. Bede was a writer whose scholarship and discernment entitle him to rank among the great historians of our literature. This wide Latin culture, centred both in Northumbria and at Canterbury, was swept away by the Scandinavian irruptions, and learning did not raise its head again till, a century later, the idealist Alfred sought its alliance in consolidating the kingdom of Wessex. No worker in the cause of education ever faced more disheartening circumstances. In all the country south of the Thames not a priest could be found able to read Latin, and only two north of it. The Latin *Life of Alfred* by the Welsh cleric, Asser, and Alfred's own preface to Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, inform us of the enterprises which the King set on foot in his two periods of comparative leisure, 888–93 and 897–901. He instituted a court school for the reading of Latin and English, sought out scholars abroad, and translated or instigated the translation of the chief works of erudition of his day. Bishop Werferth of Worcester translated the *Dialogues of Gregory the Great*. Alfred, with other help, translated the *Cura*

Latin writers

King Alfred

Pastoralis of Gregory; the *Universal History* of Orosius was freely adapted and extended, as in the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan, and in the geographical description of Germania. The English versions of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* were other channels by which he brought to his people new streams of knowledge in ethics, philosophy, and history. At the same time, he acquired a prose style, remarkable, in the passages which are not merely translations, for an attractive simplicity, which seems the direct reflection of his high-minded and courageous personality. To Alfred we owe in all probability the fuller records of the Old English *Chronicle*, which, in some recensions, dates back to B.C. 60. But, with the exception of a barbaric incident of Cynewulf (not, of course, the poet) and Cyneheard in 755, the monkish annals are bald enough till we come to the reigns of Alfred and his son. From 893–7 and from 911–24, the tale of the Danish wars is full and practised in expression; and this is true, likewise, of the years 975–1001. Between these two periods comes a barren patch, completely redeemed, however, by the war poetry which ranks with the earlier epic as the finest outcome of the pagan English spirit. Under the date 937 is a verse record of Athelstan's victory at Brunanburh. Tennyson made a poem of his son's prose translation of these lines. Of much finer quality is *The Battle of Maldon*, 991, the story of the raid of Anlaf the Dane for tribute, in which the noble Byrhtnoth fell. The insolent demand for gold; the reply that the oppressed will yield only the tribute of sword and

War poetry in the *Chronicle*

spear; the fierce clamour of hand-to-hand fighting; the heroic death of Byrhtnoth at the head of his band; the maintenance of the battle by Ælfwine, Offa, and Dunnere with their proud, simple talk—these are set forth in a vigorous narrative which rings with loyalty and valour and in which we single out each stroke and fall as we do in the poems of the heroic tradition, *Beowulf* and *Finnsburh*. *Judith*, once thought to be Cædmon's, is now dated in the tenth century also. The poem is a fragment based on the *Apocrypha*, and records with intense dramatic energy the slaughter of Holofernes, and Judith's summons to the Israelites. Like the war poems, *Judith* is in the alliterative measure; and we should have said that alliteration as the normal form of verse made a noble ending in these poems, were it not for the remarkable revival of it in the fourteenth century, in the western parts of England.

Judith

To the religious revival under Dunstan and his pupils in the middle of the tenth century we owe other prose in Old English. The nineteen *Blickling Homilies* are sermons and legends, rough prototypes of the more finished *Homilies* of Ælfric, 990–5, these last some eighty in all, expounding the mysteries of religion on various occasions of the church year. Ælfric's writing is impassioned and symbolical in his later works and has a loose alliterative rhythm, like a broken-down form of the older verse. He died about 1020 and, for generations, was the most famous of English theologians.

Ælfric

Wulfstan was a contemporary of Ælfric, but

more closely in contact with affairs; he, also, wrote *Homilies*, of which the most memorable is *The Address to the English*, which castigates his country, describes the demolition of the villages and the terror of the people, and affirms that they are suffering for crimes for which they must now repent. There is mingled gloom and patriotism in the picture of the England over which Danish invasions were encroaching; it is like a late echo of the plaint of Gildas concerning the harrying of Britain by the English themselves.

Henceforth, judging from the records extant, Old English prose ebbs away, leaving insignificant traces, such as the continuation of the *Chronicle* at Peterborough till Stephen's reign, when the cry of a ravaged land is repeated a third time. Some legends of the East are found, which are prophetic of the incoming tide of that fashion of romance. Two hundred years elapse before a prose as accomplished as Ælfric's is evolved again in English.

BOOK II

THE MIDDLE AGES, 1066–1500

I. Poetry from the Conquest to Chaucer

It is hardly possible to overstate the importance of the Norman conquest in the history of our literature. All the changes which it brought in its train did not become immediately apparent; but they were implicit in the historical fact. By the time of Chaucer, a new nation had been evolved by the crossing of English and Norman stocks. The process, at first slow, was accelerated by the separation from Normandy in 1204, with the result that, in poems such as *Richard Cœur de Lion* and Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, *c.* 1300, a sense of patriotic unity is completely developed. The vital requirement of a new speech was met by the acceptance of the Teutonic trunk, upon which was grafted the vocabulary of the invaders for all the interests and enterprises which the new ruling and leisured class had brought into national life. At the same time, the natural tendency of Old English to shed some of its many inflections was hastened by the Norman, following quickly upon the Danish, invasion. The process was almost completed by

The language

Chaucer's time, and the language thus formed is one of the marvellous accidents of history.

While this formative process was at work, books were written in Latin. Latin was the tongue of the schoolmen and of the vast compendia of theology, philosophy, and law which are characteristic of the Middle Ages. Anselm, John of Salisbury, Walter Map, Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, William of Ockham, Duns Scotus, and Richard of Bury, author of *Philobiblon*, carry the story of scholarship from 1089 to about 1350. Latin chroniclers had great influence on succeeding literature, as, for instance, William of Malmesbury, Giraldus Cambrensis, who describes Wales and Ireland, and Matthew Paris, d. 1259, a historiographer of rare historical sense and fine independence. Geoffrey of Monmouth has no standing among the exact historians; but he has a higher title to fame, for his *History of the Kings of Britain*, *c.* 1136, is the parent-stock, not only of the stories of Lear, Cymbeline, and Sabrina, but of the legends of King Arthur as well.

Latin

Anglo-French did a greater work in conveying Norman culture to England than in producing literature. The chroniclers, Gaimar and Wace, followed, in Anglo-French verse, the romantic track of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Marie de France, *c.* 1180, who lived in England, wrote her delightful *lais* of virgin-worship, love, and fairy-lore in almost pure French. A *Bestiary* and some saints' lives were also written under the religious impulse which was strong among the Normans.

French

English was preserved only by the conquered

English poetry to 1250

people, much more numerous than its conquerors, but excluded from all offices of authority; its writings, therefore, were rather depressed and halting. In the main, they followed the tradition of Old English sacred verse; a rapid review of them, however, will show some of the steps by which was evolved the final form of English verse; syllabic, accentual, rimed, not alliterative by principle, as in Old English, not quantitative, as in Latin, not having a fixed cæsura, as in French, though each of these speeches contributed something to the final result.

The *Moral Ode*, *c.* 1170, a religious exhortation, has rimed lines of fourteen syllables with little alliteration. *Ormulum*, *c.* 1200, by one Orm (a homilist and phonetician whose most valuable quality is that he doubled the consonant after every short vowel in a closed syllable, in the ten thousand lines of his poem), has alternate lines of eight and seven syllables, with neither rime nor alliteration. A *Bestiary*, *c.* 1210, an allegorical interpretation of a mythical natural history, has, generally, six-syllabled riming lines with some alliteration. The *Orison of our Lady*, *c.* 1210, has riming couplets of uncertain length and occasional alliteration. *Genesis and Exodus*, *c.* 1250, a paraphrase, has riming verse of four beats, an amazing forerunner of the metre of *Christabel*, though it had no immediate followers. The *Proverbs of Hendyng*, *c.* 1270, about twenty years later than the *Proverbs of Alfred*, have six-lined stanzas with a regular rime scheme. From all this we may draw the conclusion that regular metre and rime were gradually ousting the older alliterative verse.

Two poems of this date have intrinsic worth and show how English was coming to its own, though dealing with matter imported from France; these are Layamon's *Brut* (one version of 1200 and one of *c.* 1250), and *The Owl and the Nightingale*, *c.* 1220.

The age was full of *Bruts;* Layamon's material was derived from one of the copies of Wace's chronicle, and he distils his original into English; in the thirty-two thousand short lines of his poem there are not a hundred French words. Being a priest on the borders of Wales, he incorporated stories and legends from his own country and he probably had sources of which as yet we know nothing. His fame lies in the fact that he was the first Englishman to treat the story of Arthur in English. In Layamon, the elves are concerned in Arthur's birth, the King becomes a more knightly and courteous figure, and his mysterious passing is added; we hear more of the Round Table than in Wace; the poet tells, also, with occasional power and poetry, the tales of Lear and Cymbeline and other legendary kings. The shambling measure of his poem, chiefly alliterative but often drifting towards rime, with no certain principle of line division, illustrates afresh the passage from the old to the new romance metres.

The Owl and the Nightingale was the work of a practised writer making use of the Provençal form of the *tençon* known, later, in Scots, as a "flyting," that is to say, a heated dispute. In this case, the nightingale states and illustrates the case for the poetry of noble love; the owl replies on behalf of the poetry of religion. The underlying contrast is that between art and morality. The natural back-

ground is pleasing, and the poet has command of many resources of characterisation and humorous abuse. Though the poet does not definitely take sides, his work is one of the first pleas in English for gaiety, and, at this period, it comes like an oasis in the dreary waste of homiletic verse; it is written in a perfectly accomplished form of rimed octosyllabic couplets.

Romance

The poem of Layamon may serve to introduce us to the vast province of romance, the taste for which, if not of Norman origin, was certainly of Norman importation. The epic temper of *Beowulf*, or of *Le Chanson de Roland* in France, gives way to this new spirit, how completely we may see by a comparison of the enterprises of Beowulf with those of people of his rank in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. The ideals of court, battlefield, and monastery pervade nearly all the stories which the age gathered from the story-loving East, from late Greek romances, from history and legend, and from such prolific soil as that of Wales and Brittany. The transformation may be seen at work in the crusading zeal of Roland, whose anti-Saracenic heroism is far removed from the simple patriotic courage of Byrhtnoth. The Frank is dislodging the Teuton. Upon this type of prowess were brought to bear many influences to which we may give the general name *courtoisie*. The Church fostered the chivalric zeal of the Crusades; the castles of the feudal system provided a polite and refined audience, largely dominated by women, for whose approval these later *trouvères* and *jongleurs* (makers and singers) sought. Here came into play the softening influence

of the troubadours and the Provençal courts of love, and, indirectly, of the amorist poet, Ovid. All this was as powerful in England as in Normandy, and the final result was that England became a literary appanage of the Latin nations and looked for its faith and ancestry no longer to Old English mythology and history, but, in common with the rest of Christendom, to the mythical Brutus of Troy and Rome.

Romances were classified by an old French poet, Jean Bodel, under the headings of France, Britain, and "Rome the great"; but, even if we allow Rome to signify all antiquity, there are other "matters" (as they were called) not comprehended in his classification. We have little of the Carolingian matter of France in England; the best in this cycle is *Sir Ferumbras*. Of the matter of Britain, the Arthurian stories are discussed separately; but there are other Celtic tales: *Sir Tristrem*, *Ywain and Gawain*, and the alliterative *Awntyrs of Arthur*, which came from Wales or Brittany, as, also, fairy stories such as *Sir Orfeo* (Orpheus), *Sir Gowther*, and the riming *Mort Arthur*. There are Old English stories which were put into French romance forms and then back again into English, such as *Havelok* and *Horn*, of which the former retains more of their common Anglo-Danish origin than the latter. *Guy of Warwick*, also, in the first place, was Anglo-Danish. *Bevis of Hampton*, the most lengthy and popular, though not the most distinguished of native romances, similarly belongs to the matter of England. As for the matter of Rome or antiquity, the Troy legends will be discussed in connection with Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde;* there exists a romance of *King Alisaunder*;

Chaucer used Thebes in *The Knight's Tale* and Lydgate wrote *The Story of Thebes*. Chaucer made some use of the *Æneid* also. The matter of the East provided *Floris and Blancheflour* and *The Seven Sages of Rome*, and Chaucer found it useful in *The Squire's Tale*. Some are outside these cycles, such as *Cœur de Lion*, and other tales of famous kings; the perfect story of *Amis and Amiloun*, *The Squire of Low Degree*, and *Ipomedon* are unattached tales of chivalry. Most of these romances share the same unlocalised, often enchanted, background; they have not any national or patriotic note; they are altogether aristocratic, and do not touch at any point the actual life of their day. They consist, generally, of thousands of lines, mostly in the octosyllabic couplet of their French progenitors; but English stanza forms of the type which Chaucer quizzed unmercifully in *Sir Thopas* developed alongside the couplet.

King Arthur

It is not profitable to discuss whether the Arthur of legend has any historical prototype; he is not mentioned in the Old English *Chronicle*, nor in Bede, nor in Gildas; the first historical reference is in the *Historia Britonum* of Nennius, where he has miraculous powers, and wars against the Saxons. Early Welsh and Breton lays know him as a wizard and a hero. Through the contact between Breton and Norman he was transformed into a romantic and chivalrous hero and he finds his way prominently into literature in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *History of the Kings of Britain*, *c.* 1136, in which the chronicler's fertile imagination evolved a complete genealogy of British kings from Brute to Cadwalader, including such names as

Sabrina, King Lear, and Gorboduc. So late as Milton, it was taken for authentic history. In this book are recounted tales of Merlin and of Arthur's miraculous birth, his conquests throughout Europe, the advance upon Rome, and his recall to fight a last battle with his faithless nephew Mordred. The book had enormous popularity and, from this time, Arthur became one of the major heroes of European romance. The *Brut* of the Jersey poet Wace developed the hint of the Round Table; many heads and pens, mostly French, busily wove separate legends into this main fabric. Chrestien de Troyes inwove the tale of Lancelot and the faithless Guenever, whose courtly love is worlds apart from the elemental passion of the Celtic lovers, Tristram and Iseult. Robert de Borron is thought to have attached the Graal story, with which are linked up the monastic legends of Joseph of Arimathea. At first, Gawain was the hero of the quest, but he is deprived of this honour in Malory and Tennyson; Sir Percival is also deposed later in favour of the still more ascetic Sir Galahad. From these five main sources, the stories of Merlin, of Lancelot, of Tristram, of the Graal, and of the death of Arthur, Malory drew the scenes and motives, the groupings and the colouring, with which he composed the pictures, in his enchanted gallery, *Le Morte Arthur*.

Verse from 1250 to 1400. 1. Religious

The Auchinleck MS., which contains a number of these romances, is of about 1320, and romances continue long after Chaucer's death; his pointed satire of them in *Sir Thopas*, if it intended extinction as well as ridicule, was ineffective. The other verse of the period consists largely of homiletic work,

the religious impulse being reinforced by the Dominicans and Franciscans about 1221. The poems of William of Shoreham, *c.* 1300, on church rites and the like, are in lyrical stanzas which may faintly remind us of George Herbert. He also made a prose translation of the *Psalter*. Robert of Gloucester wrote saints' lives *c.* 1300, after he had composed a chronicle from the siege of Troy to his own day, in riming lines of fifteen syllables. Cycles of saints' legends exist in the north and south but they are inferior to the Old English *Andreas*. Akin to these cycles are the didactic poems *Handlynge Sinne*, 1303, and *The Pricke of Conscience*, 1349(?), the former by Robert Mannynge of Brunne, a popular sermon-maker of anecdotical turn, who also wrote a chronicle; the latter either by Richard Rolle of Hampole, some of whose prose works have an impetuous emotionalism, verging at times on mysticism, or by others of his school. Of equal importance in the same school is *Cursor Mundi*, 1300, a popular compendium of accredited and apocryphal Christian legend, exalting the Trinity, the Holy Rood, and the Virgin Mary; its octosyllabic couplets are lucid and clear, and its numerous stories told with no mean skill. It may well have influenced the analogous material of the miracle plays.

2. Satire

Some scraps of social satire, such as *The Land of Cockaigne*, making mock of friars and of cheating professions, presage Chaucer and Langland, as *Dame Siriz*, *c.* 1260, anticipates Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*. *The Fox and the Wolf*, with Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, are almost all we have of the great continental beast-epic, *Reynard the Fox*. *The Battle of Lewes*, 1264, points to the

political and patriotic verse, vigorous and scornful, if not highly imaginative, in which Laurence Minot castigated the French and the Scots and celebrated the prowess of Englishmen at the sieges and battles of Edward III from 1332 to 1352.

3. Lyric

The solitary *Love-Song*, *c.* 1240, of Thomas de Hales, treating of the passing of earthly beauty, is all that precedes an outburst of lyric, including *Sumer is i-cumen in*, *Alysoun*, and *Lenten is come with love to toune:* daintiness of feeling, skilful choice of fitting natural imagery, and gaiety of treatment make these songs memorable in the history of English lyric; others have a note of melancholy, not unlike Wyatt's; others are religious and penitential.

4. The alliterative revival

There is a brilliant renascence of the Old English alliterative measure, with marked technical changes, in the fourteenth century. The knowledge and practice of this old prosody presumably survived in the western counties. There are romances, such as *Gawayne and the Grene Knight*, *Morte d'Arthure*, *The Awntyrs of Arthur* and *William of Palerne;* religious and satirical poems, as those of Langland and his followers; homiletic and allegorical poems, *Cleanness* (inculcating purity), *Patience*, and *Pearl;* together with other things, such as *The Pistil* (epistle) *of Susan*, which has some rare touches of pathos. *Sir Gawayne*, *c.* 1370, which mixes romance measures, at irregular intervals, with the alliterative, records the coming of the Green Knight to challenge the knights of Camelot to an exchange of blows. Sir Gawayne at length accepts and cuts off the stranger's

head. The mysterious and adventurous sequel to this deed is told in a narrative, enriched with colour and pageantry, diversified by surprises of enchantment and suggestions of terror, and set in a background of rare scenic beauty. By virtue of its art and its individuality the poem ranks among the major products of medieval romance.

Pearl is an elegiac vision of the spirit of the child of the writer, probably a married priest in minor orders. The poet creates a land of crystal cliffs, magic streams, and flowered fields, where he meets his daughter, Pearl, and, after much play upon the name, begins to speak in terms of rebellious grief, to which the child replies with heavenly wisdom. Scriptural imagery and story run through the poem, consummating in a finely imaginative picture of the new Jerusalem and of the brides of the Lamb. It is the climax of English medieval religious poetry. These two poems, together with *Cleanness* and *Patience*, are in one MS. and, probably, by one author. The proposal to father these and other alliterative poems of this period on a Scottish poet called Huchowne is still a matter of debate.

Langland

There have been recent attempts to dissolve the shadowy personality of William Langland, 1332(?)–99(?), into some five unnamed persons; be this as it may, we shall, for the present, regard him as a poor minor clerk, or priest, whose wanderings acquainted him with peasants about the Malvern hills, dwellers in London, professional beggars, and, generally, with the classes most affected by the oppressions of the rich, the corruption of the Church, famine, the black death,

and war-taxation. The poem attributed to Langland, entitled *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*, was made public in three forms, now known as the A-, B-, and C-texts, the short A-text in 1362, the longer (generally printed) B-text in 1377, and the C-text in 1398(?). The B-text has a prologue and seven sections followed by the visions of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best. It is rather formless and inconsequent, being made up of a series of abruptly introduced dreams and sermons, such as those of Holy Church and Reason; allegories melting into realistic scenes, such as the field full of folk, the trial of Lady Meed at Westminster, and the gathering of the seven deadly sins; fables, such as the rats and the mice; and pilgrimages in search of truth. All these are unified, not by any constructive scheme, but by the prophetic spirit of the writer, working, at times, through satire and, again, through exhortation. He is not a Lollard, nor a factionist defying authority; he is "a church and king man," well content with the organisation of the state, but distressed that not a single class is fulfilling its divinely appointed function. Piers, the honest peasant, is the saviour of the state, affording it subsistence, leading pilgrimages in search of truth, and providing the immediately practicable remedy for social ills by setting all classes to work. The writer pictures the Church, as did Chaucer and all other contemporary witnesses, as a nest of hypocrites, but he does not propose its abolition; his wish is that its orders should resist the blandishments of Lady Meed and live well. Realism and allegory meet in the subtly conceived figure of Lady Meed, a woman of wanton graces,

fallen from the high estate of just reward to that of dishonest bribery. The later sections, Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best, are less realistic and more doctrinal. The first is a vision of Activa-Vita, in the main, a picture of Piers the peasant; the second is a vision of faith, hope, and charity, closing with Easter bells; the third, in a darker mood, paints anti-Christ and death, and leaves the dreamer setting out anew in search of Piers (or Christ) throughout the world. The undoubted power of the work lies in its spiritual and mystic ideal, its urgent sincerity, its vivid observation and realistic detail, its hatred of abuses, and the plain-spoken earnestness of its teaching. It is the chief product of the alliterative renascence of the fourteenth century. Of the same school are the contemporary poems, *Richard the Redeless* and *Piers the Plowman's Creed.*

Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1340(?)–1400, towers like a peak above the rest of contemporary poets; he was a man of more varied experience than they, being tradesman's son, squire at court, soldier, diplomat, ambassador, keeper of customs, warden of the banks of the Thames, member of Parliament, clerk of the royal works, scholar and scientist. His first training was in French, and he wrote ballades, *virelais*, and *roundels* (now partly lost), complaints, *unto Pity* and the like, an *A.B.C.*, a verse-prayer, and *The Book of the Duchess*, on the occasion of the death of John of Gaunt's first wife (Chaucer afterwards married the sister of the Duke's third wife). Of lasting import was his translation of part of *Le Roman de la Rose*, the French poem of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung, of whom

the former personified the perils that beset lovers, whilst the latter shrewdly satirised the whole social economy of his day. In this exercise, Chaucer acquired practice in the octosyllabic couplet, and a store of medieval conventions—the dream motive, allegory, the garden with legend-haunted walls, and the May morning scene. Much of his learning came from this source, and some of his later characters, as the friar and the prioress, may be discerned in embryo in the French poem.

The Italian period

Chaucer never completely discarded his French training, but he is distinguished from all his fellows by his contact with the Italian renascence; the two influences are seen contending in *Anelida and Arcite*. His first Italian journey in 1372 made him acquainted with Latin works and, for a time, he turned to church legend and martyrology for themes, writing the tales of St. Cecile, of Griselda, and of the tragedies of fallen princes, later incorporated in *The Canterbury Tales* as those of the Second Nun, the Clerk of Oxford, and the Monk respectively. After his second Italian visit in 1378–9, he tired of this partial attitude to life. He wrote *The Parliament of Fowls*, 1382, a dramatic picture of a bustling vivacious crowd of birds, with much humorous observation and fine feeling; in *The House of Fame*, which owes some debt to Dante, he is initiated by the cheerful explanatory eagle into the "quick forge and working-house" of Lady Fame, and the caprices of rumour. The prologue of *The Legend of Good Women* is Chaucer's last use of the allegorical dream: the legends are Ovid's *Heroides* re-told. Chaucer left it, like

many other experiments, unfinished. *Troilus and Criseyde* belongs to the Troy section of the "matter of antiquity," which reached Chaucer by devious ways. The forged Latin chronicles of Dictys the Cretan and Dares the Phrygian, supposed eye-witnesses of the fate of Troy, gave rise to extended fabrications, first by Benoît de Ste. More, *c.* 1165, in French verse, and then by Guido delle Colonne, 1287, in Latin prose, whence *The Geste Historyale of Troy* in English and the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio in Italian. *Filostrato* has a finely studied portrait of Troilus. Chaucer revised and enlarged Boccaccio's tale in his *Troilus*. It is, in fact, a long novel, though written in rime royal. In construction, appropriateness of detail, blending of humour and tragedy, skill in dialogue, sense for the romantic background and historic figures of Troy, and, above all, in its characterisation of Pandarus, no mean predecessor of Falstaff, and of the "graceful mutable soul" of Criseyde, it immeasurably surpasses all other romances of Catholic Christendom.

The period of maturity

By this time the poet had won—a difficult accomplishment in the Middle Ages—freedom for his own individuality. The years from 1386 to 1400 are often called, only half relevantly, his English period. He had already made collections of stories in *The Monk's Tale* and in *The Legend of Good Women*. *The Canterbury Tales* are far more varied, for Chaucer's art is evident, not only in his choice of the framework of a pilgrimage, but, also, in the vivacity with which the conception is sustained. The initial jest of the host, Harry Bailey, and his efforts to ensure its

success, the coercing of the recalcitrant pilgrims, the frank expressions of opinion, the diverse qualities of the travellers' mounts, the incidents in the open lanes and at stopping places, all combine to impart an air of lifelikeness and animation, not attained even by Chaucer's accomplished competitor, Boccaccio, in his *Decameron*. The company numbers thirty-one, of whom a third belong to the Church. All men in orders save one are offenders against their vows, as the poet's penetrating, though never violent, satire makes plain. There are gentlefolks, men of professional rank and of the wealthy middle classes, coarse underlings and the ploughman, who, with his brother, the poor parson of a town, does his duty and wins Chaucer's approval. There is no bishop, no noble, no professional soldier (the knight is a crusader), and no beggar, but, these apart, all classes of fourteenth-century England are sketched to the life in Chaucer's masterpiece of portraiture, the *Prologue*. The persons in the wonderfully managed crowd are characterised by dress, temperament, manners, and pursuits, by the tales they tell, by the links of conversation between them, and, once or twice, in lengthy monologues. Dryden did not overstate the case when he said, "Here is God's plenty." The tales are of every kind and, generally, though not always, suited to the teller. *The Pardoner's Tale* is of narrative skill all compact; *The Knight's* and *Squire's* show how Chaucer strengthened and refined romance; the coarse *fabliaux* of the Miller and Reeve have brilliant farcical humour, which takes a decisively satirical turn in *The Somnour's Tale*. The religious legend told by the Prioress has the purest and most sustained melody

in Chaucer; *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, a fragment of the beast epic, opens quietly and closes with furious speed. This variety of material shows the suppleness of his imagination, shaping, with equal ease, realism, satire, enchantment, frolic, and romance.

Chaucer had the keenest enjoyment of the panorama of life, focussing his vision on its lighter, rather than on its more sombre, side; it has been remarked that, in his poetry, he avoids the large events of his time; his mental temperament was unfitted for the supreme themes of tragedy. He met minor disasters with a buoyant spirit, as in his genial salute to hard times, *The Complaint to his Empty Purse*. His truest quality was his humour; he viewed mankind with tolerant worldly irony; he loved nothing better than to set rogues betraying themselves. Upon nature, too, he had a fresh and joyous outlook; he invests his conventional landscape with a touch of Botticellian grace; the May mornings in Chaucer are lit with sunshine and alive with woodland sounds. There are qualities in which he differs from the modern poet: we are apt to resent (forgetting that Chaucer was, in many things, of his age) the irrelevant learning which clogs the movement of his narrative; he may condone faults which we cannot allow to be venial; his immovable benignity may not be so stimulating as the exacting moral challenge of later poets. But he is our first humanist, our first lover of the life and mind of man at large, not making any reserves and bestowing the same zest and sureness and art on the portrayal of the noble, the tender, the mirthful, and the base. This he did in incomparable narrative verse, and his only rival in English is his poetical

kinsman and disciple, William Morris. For this, he wrought out for himself a measure, bolder, charged with a more subtle music, and demanding a greater mastery than French romantic models offered, namely, the ten-syllabled line, which for centuries proved the inevitable medium of most English verse, except lyric. Chaucer used it first in rime royal, and then in the heroic couplet. Whether Chaucer derived this from Guillaume de Machault, or detected it among earlier native experiments by his own prescient ear, or took the suggestion from the couplets at the close of his rime royal, is uncertain; in any case, this is the verse in which he achieved the "divine liquidness of diction" and "fluidity of movement" which charmed the ear of Matthew Arnold. It is no longer contended that Chaucer imported French words wholesale into our speech; Spenser called him the "well of English undefiled"; and it is proved now, that Chaucer, like Gower, employed the normal vocabulary of the London of his day. No doubt, his practice, together with many accessory circumstances, established the eastern midland dialect as the standard form of English.

Gower

Sir John Gower, 1325(?)–1408, is what Chaucer might have been without genius and without Italy. He wrote first in French his *Mirrour de l'Omme*, a book of edification and allegory, which may have provoked Chaucer's reference to him as "moral Gower," though this reference may equally have been to some of the less improving of Gower's tales. Next, in Latin verse, he wrote *Vox Clamantis*. 1382, much of which deals with the social conditions out of which arose the peasants'

rebellion of 1381: the successive versions of the poem indicate his dwindling faith in Richard II, and his Latin *Cronica Tripartita*, 1400, records the events preceding Richard's fall and Bolingbroke's triumph. His third poem, *Confessio Amantis*, 1390, in English octosyllabic couplets, turns from these disquieting matters to the courtly subject of love, "somewhat of lust, somewhat of lore." The lover makes confession to Genius, the priest of Venus, and is instructed by means of some scores of fluently told stories from the classics, the chronicles, and medieval collections (though not *Gesta Romanorum*), how to remedy his faults, and atone for his delinquencies. All this resembles *Le Roman de la Rose*, and Gower, in fact, belonged to the *Rose* generation by the make of his mind. He is neglected now, but he was a great collector of stories, and told them well, though not with the iridescent gleams of humour and insight which colour those of Chaucer. He is clear and has some sense of form; his verse and language are sound and regular; it may be that the very regularity of his verse induces the feeling of monotony which causes us to neglect him: there are too few prominences in his landscape.

2. Prose from the Conquest to 1400

Religious prose

The prose of this period does not show well beside the best prose of Old English; for, following French practice, English writers put the most prosaic subjects into verse. Apart from the Old English *Chronicle*, which closes gloomily in 1154 with the death of Stephen, the existing prose

is of the type of homily—as, for instance, part of *The Soul's Ward*, *c.* 1210—or of saints' lives—as, for instance, of *St. Margaret* and others, full of crude incitements to the conventual life; these, with *Holy Maidenhood*, *c.* 1210, are in a heavily alliterated prose, very near to verse. One memorable exception to the dulness of this catalogue is the *Ancren Riwle* or *Rule for Anchoresses*, *c.* 1210. Its eight books define the duties and observances for three nuns, settled in a Dorset convent. Its engaging humanity, freedom from pedantry,—though its framework is entirely medieval,—sympathy, and enlightenment have won for it universal recognition as the expression of a fine and delightful religious mind. The *Ayenbite of Inwit* or *Remorse of Conscience*, another collection of sermons, by Dan Michel, *c.* 1340, has not much value as literature or translation, though it is interesting to see the ever-present seven deadly sins (they appear in *Ancren Riwle*, Chaucer, Langland, Wyclif, Dunbar, and, later, in Marlowe) here treated allegorically. Richard Rolle of Hampole has been named elsewhere. Chaucer wrote prose both secular and religious, always competent, and rising to high levels at times in his *Boece*. His religious prose includes this translation of Boethius, his portentous "littel thing in prose" the tale of *Melibeus and Prudence*, and *The Parson's Tale*, which expounds the whole doctrine of sin, penitence, confession, and discipline. But the best religious prose of this age was written by Wyclif and writers belonging to his school.

John Wyclif, 1320(?)–84, like Richard Rolle a Yorkshireman, was closely connected with Balliol College, where an arduous training in the scholastic curriculum

put him in the front rank of controversialists. He opposed the Church on such doctrines as transubstantiation, the tenure of property and the superiority of Scripture over tradition. Political events, in which he was supported by John of Gaunt, his own independent disposition, and his growing disbelief in the papacy, accentuated by the existence of two rival popes in 1378, drove him to appeal to the people at large, first by his institution of poor priests, and, secondly, by inspiring (his personal share in the work remains unidentified) the translation of the Vulgate version of the Bible. Of the two versions of the translation, one partly composed by Nicholas of Hereford, and the other revised by John Purvey, the latter is by far the superior. No doubt it had been preceded by many translations of portions of the Bible; but, all things considered, the version known as Wyclif's may be taken as the worthy inauguration of the great series of translations of the Bible. It has two of the qualities of the Authorised Version—simplicity and dignity; it is lacking in the grace and power of rhythm which the subtler ear of a later generation added. Whatever part Wyclif took in the version, he must have credit for the generous intention and courage of the undertaking. He and his allies poured out a multitude of tracts and sermons on the abuses of the age, and the Lollards afterwards carried these charges and doctrines to extremes. The pamphlets are awkward in composition, but their purpose demanded popular qualities, and a keen, vigorous, democratic speech.

Wyclif and the Bible

By the year 1400, proceedings in law-courts were

conducted in English, Parliament had been opened in an English speech, and boys construed their Latin in school into English instead of French. Nevertheless, all prose, until the time of Chaucer, was in the form of translation. In 1387 appeared John of Trevisa's version of Higden's Latin *Polychronicon*, a history of the world from the creation. It gives the first topographical description of England in English and set a long-enduring fashion. In 1398, he completed a translation of the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartolomæus, the best-known medieval encyclopædia of nature. Trevisa's style, though not polished, is robust and colloquial, and gained for his writings a wide popularity. Chaucer wrote his *Astrolabe*, mostly translation, in 1391, for his "little son Lewis."

Secular prose

The first book of entertainment in English prose is *The Voyage and Travel of Sir John Mandeville, Knight*, written originally in French, 1371, and put into English by an unknown translator. Mystery surrounds the titular author; we do know that Sir John never existed, but we do not know whether to attribute his creation to one D'Outremeuse, or another Jean de Bourgogne. The book professes to be a manual for pilgrims to the Holy Land, and, in the first part, describes Constantinople, Egypt, and Palestine. The second part, based on the authentic travels of friar Odoric, ranges afield, introducing Prester John, the great Cham, the "islands" of China, growing diamonds, loadstone mountains, and the valley of devils. By a process of thoroughgoing and unacknowledged filching from all the travellers' books within reach,

Mandeville

the writer gathers a *corpus* of fictions and marvels and relates them with an air of ingenuous purposefulness and candour that would have left any but his credulous medieval audience aghast either at his daring or his humour. As prose, it is technically little better than any other of its time; but, until Berners's *Froissart*, it is the only book which fascinates a modern reader. This it does by its firm resolve to entertain at all costs, and also by the absence of the deadening sense of anonymity which renders many medieval books unimpressive and commonplace.

3. Verse from Chaucer to the Renascence

The Chaucerian tradition

There were devoted followers of Chaucer—though generally of his immature work—in England, such as Lydgate and Occleve, but their voluminousness does not compensate for their almost invariable flatness and lack of inspiration; Chaucer's mantle did not descend upon them but upon the contemporary lowland Scots. John Lydgate, 1370(?)–1451(?) wrote a *Troy Book* of 30,000 lines and, at still greater length, *The Falls of Princes*, embodying the same medieval conception of tragedy as *The Monk's Tale* and, later, *The Mirror for Magistrates;* his *Story of Thebes* he proposed to insert in *The Canterbury Tales*. *The Pilgrimage of Man* combines all the medieval forms of allegory, and, in some remote way, may have influenced Bunyan. *London Lickpenny*, a piece of realistic social satire, describing the undoing of a countryman by the sharps about Westminster, is not now credited to Lydgate. The chief poem of Occleve,

c. 1368 (?)–*c.* 1450 (?) is his *De Regimine Principum*, which gives advice to the Prince of Wales, based on "a blending of Aristotle and Solomon"; in *La Male Règle*, the poet confesses himself a pale kind of wastrel. These writers do not bring anything new in theme or treatment, and their attempts at rime royal and heroic couplet only show how completely they had lost hold of all that Chaucer had won for English prosody. More pleasing are several poems once thought Chaucer's but now detached from his canon. To Clanvowe is assigned *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, 1403–10; to Lydgate, *The Complaint of the Black Knight;* and to an unknown writer *The Flower and the Leaf*, *c.* 1450, picturing the retinue and livery, green and white, of those who serve the transitory flower and the permanent leaf. Dryden thought it Chaucer's and reset it in his *Fables*. *The Court of Love*, that is to say, of Venus, instances the prolonging of the Chaucerian tradition of *Le Roman de la Rose* well into the sixteenth century. It was resumed in the reign of Henry VII by Stephen Hawes, 1475–1530. The training and practice of the knight in learning and chivalry is the theme of his allegorical *Pastime of Pleasure;* but Hawes's dream has no magic and his personifications are anemic; the subject awaited its predestined master, Spenser. John Skelton soon turned from the fashion of allegory in rime royal, but not finding any adequate models to hand, took to writing a quick short line, sufficiently superior to doggerel to acquire the label Skeltonic verse; "ragged, tattered, and jagged" he calls it, though it has more music than this description suggests, and it has pith.

In this metre he wrote the playful *Book of Philip Sparrow*, on the death of a nun's pet bird, and *Colin Clout*, one of many satires of which the most stinging was his attack on Wolsey, "Why come ye not to Court?" Skelton came too early; sixty years later, his audacity and learning would have made him a university wit. Alexander Barclay freely translated the *Narrenschiff* of the German Brant into *The Ship of Fools*, 1509; he also brought into English, without adorning it, the form of the eclogue. The feebly flowing currents of inspiration in fifteenth century work in England were soon to be refreshed by a torrent; the renascence was at our shores. Meanwhile, we may turn to the truer disciples of Chaucer in the north.

The Scots poets

The literature of Scotland is written in a northern dialect of English; Barbour, the first considerable poet, called it "our Ynglis." His *Brus*, *c.* 1376, is a heroic presentment of the national hero Bruce, full of fervid patriotism, closing with the triumph of Bannockburn. The same pride of country is in the *Orygynal Cronykyl*, 1406, of Andrew of Wyntoun, fabulous in its earlier parts like the English *Bruts*. Blind Harry (the minstrel) produced a violently Anglophobe *Wallace*, 1470–80, which touched and stirred Burns four centuries later. None of these felt the influence of Chaucer, nor, in the next century, did Sir David Lindsay, whose *Satire of the Three Estates*, 1535, a rough dramatic composition, is bitter and penetrating and does not shrink from any extreme of licence and indecency. But *The Kingis Quair*, or book of the king, *c.* 1423, written, in all probability, by King

James I, during his imprisonment in England, is made in the image of Chaucer and his school and has resemblances to *The Court of Love*. Its theme is the tremulous awakening passion of the youthful lover, and its delicate beauty is in consonance with its subject. It may be that it represents the King's own feeling towards the Lady Joan Beaufort whom he afterwards married. It is in rime royal; the measure may, in fact, derive its name from the kingly composition. Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, and Gavin Douglas are later Chaucerians; the perfervid Scotticism of the chroniclers is scarcely heard in them. Henryson's *Fables of Æsop* has many topical hits and plentiful moralising; *The Testament of Cressid* completes Chaucer's *Troilus* with a pathetic relation of Cressida's beggaring and death; *Robene and Makyne* is a pastoral dialogue of rare freshness and independence of form, more akin to *The Nut-Browne Maid* than to the English poet. Dunbar is the greatest, but the least like Chaucer, of these poets; his many short poems scarcely admit of classification. He has an allegory, *The Thistle and the Rose*, 1503, and *The Lament for the Makaris* (poets), closing with the refrain, *Timor mortis conturbat me*, and exalted by its manifest sincerity. But most typical are his boisterous satires, *The Two married Women*, and *The Seven Deadly Sins;* the sins are bidden by Satan to dance "as varlets do in France"; the grotesque orgy is described in verse astonishing in its brilliance and indelicate humour. These poems seal Dunbar of the clan of Rabelais and Burns by bent of mind, though he revered and is indebted to Chaucer for gentler qualities; he is also, like Chaucer, a master

of metrical effect, though his music is harsher. Gavin Douglas translated Vergil, condemning Caxton's romantic *Eneydos* without getting much further away from its medieval temper; to each book he prefaced a prologue and some of these present, with real poetic power, Scottish country scenes. Summing up the matter briefly, we may say that the narrow pre-Chaucerian patriotism gives way to qualities more intimately national in the force of satiric invective and comic phrasing in Dunbar and Lindsay and in the genuinely observed landscape of Douglas. It is interesting to note in these poets a fitful occurrence of alliteration in the manner of Old English verse; in everything else, they are the true disciples of Chaucer.

The ballads and popular poetry

We have little evidence for assigning any date to British ballads; the first invaluable collection is in the MS. called the Percy folio, of 1650. Most appear to have been composed between 1100 and 1500; but they were still being made in the eighteenth century. Scholars are coming to the conclusion that they originated, as their refrains seem to indicate, in a song accompanied by dancing and a chorus, not unlike the French *Carole*. They are not to be thought of, for the most part, as degenerate romances; they are not degenerate at all, but an elaborate form of art, admirably fitted for a definite type of narrative of a temper more akin to the epic than the romance. The first short love-song or nonsense rime gave place to a longer narrative, and this, after a time, came to be sung or recited by itself; in one case, a number of these narratives were shaped together, attaining almost to epic proportions, as in *The Little Geste of Robin*

Hood. Their themes are as numerous and often as untraceable as those of the romances. Some are of border warfare, as *The Hunting of the Cheviot*, some of fairyland, as *Thomas of Ercildoune*, some of the supernatural, as *The Wife of Usher's Well*, some of romance, as *Clerk Saunders* and *Fair Annie*, some of treachery and murder, as *Parcy Reed* and *Childe Maurice*, some of outlawry, as *Robin Hood*, who makes a splendid ballad end. Though some, like the romances, end happily, the best of them are tragic, portraying, in stark outline, hot and violent action, barbarously heroic in its sentiment, with a curious untrained art, which gets the most powerful effects out of naïve repetitions and out of economy and purity of speech. One of the most moving of all ballads, *The Nut-Browne Maid*, is almost too elaborate to have the title of ballad at all. It is a dramatic dialogue telling, with a surer touch of pathos than Chaucer has in *Griselda*, of a maid's constancy in face of the almost intolerable exactions of her lover. In addition to ballads there are many contemporary popular songs, carols, drinking-songs, religious songs, and love-songs; these are generally of a rather primitive type, but they witness to the universal taste for song and dance. Some of the Latin student songs, such as *Gaudeamus igitur*, date from this century as well.

4. Prose from Chaucer to the Renascence

In the line of chroniclers, Capgrave, *c.* 1450, Fabian, *c.* 1510, and Hall, *c.* 1530, lead on to the Elizabethan chroniclers Holinshed and Stow; here, too, should be mentioned Leland's *Itinerary*, *c.* 1540, and the Paston

Letters, 1424–1506, intimate revelations of fifteenth-century life, some of them still warm with the personal feeling of the writers. Pecock's *Repressor of over much Blaming of the Clergy*, *c.* 1455, defended the Church against the assaults of the Lollards; but, since he based his argument on reason, in place of authority, the Church found him disquietingly progressive and discarded him; he had brilliant gifts both in dialectics and in the adaptation of language. Something of the same modernity is to be found in Sir John Fortescue's *Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy*, 1471, a short plea recommending constitutional relations between king and people. We cannot do more than mention the sermons, *c.* 1509, of Bishop Fisher—who was something of a rhetorician—and of Latimer—the first of a number, Bunyan, Cobbett, Bright, who gain simplicity and force by holding fast to the English stock in the vocabulary. Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governour*, 1531, is a treatise from Italian sources on education and politics, which, incidentally, gives the story of Gascoigne and Prince Hal. There is also a pious biography of Wolsey by his usher, George Cavendish. But the more captivating works of the time are still concerned with chivalry; the greatest is *Le Morte Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. He professed to translate from a French book which as yet has eluded identification; the five main threads of the romance have already been named (see p. 21). Malory made the search for the Graal the central motive of his story, though it is sometimes obscured by lengthy interludes; the whole is rounded off with marvellous art; the separation and deaths of Lance-

Malory

lot and Guenever move us like a tragedy. "Here may be seen," says Caxton, "noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin." Caxton adds, "Do after the good and leave the evil and it shall bring you to good fame and renown"; a more humane judgment than Ascham's harsh strictures on the book. Malory has the magic control of words and rhythms which makes us grant him the "willing suspension of disbelief," while he creates an imaginative world. The natural grace and beauty of his writing are touched with a faint melancholy, which seems to reflect the soft and bewitching tints of twilight; in 1470, the nightfall of extinction was upon the ages of faith and chivalry. We cannot here attempt an estimate of the gain to letters through Caxton's introduction of printing into England in 1476; he printed many translations, including Malory's, making some of them himself; his original prefaces reveal a splendid personality keenly interested in romance and in the transitional world about him. This is true, again, of Lord Berners, the translator of *Froissart's Chronicles*, *c.* 1523. Here are the trappings of knighthood, "trumpets blown for wars," sieges and sea-fights, stratagems and parleys, set down with a persuasive touch of intimacy; it is not the sifted history of the modern scholar, but it is singularly faithful to the speech and life of the fighters and rulers of his time. He uses, for the most part, a simple graphic prose in the chronicles, but he envied those who possessed the "facundious art of rhethorique," and, in his version of the Spaniard Guevara's *Dial of Princes*, he

Froissart

anticipated some of the extravagances of Euphuism. It is credited to him, also, that, in his translation of *Huon of Bordeaux*, he enriched the fairy lore of England by the kingly figure of Oberon.

The Bible

Encouraged by Erasmus's pronouncement for a Bible in the native speech, Tyndale worked devotedly at the New Testament and other parts of the Scriptures until his martyrdom in 1536; his original was not the Vulgate but the Greek New Testament of Erasmus, and, substantially, though with revisions of detail, his translation is the Authorised Version; he conferred upon it that popular but dignified idiom which proved admirably in consonance with the Semitic matter of the Old Testament. Coverdale had a hand in the first Great Bible, 1539, Cranmer in the second Great Bible, 1540, Archbishop Parker in the Bishops' Bible, 1568. Forty-seven divines were entrusted with the making of the Authorised Version, 1606–11; they retained from the earlier Bible its simplicity, its unaffected archaism, its picturesqueness, its predominantly English wording, with occasional doublets, sin and transgression, and the like, and added some indefinable quality, never again to be attained; it is impossible to degrade the English of the Bible, and, apart from the fact that it is "the anchor of national seriousness," it has remained a permanent and undisputed standard of prose, the most powerful plea in our language for the virtues of simplicity and rhythmic grace in writing. *The Book of Common Prayer*, also, is a product of many minds; chief among them ranks Archbishop Cranmer, though prayers were added down to 1661.

BOOK III

THE RENASCENCE, 1500–1660

I. The New Forces at Work

Nothing in the past at this date, except the persistently ignored later work of Chaucer, prophesied what was to come. The tired mechanism of medieval existence had almost stopped when history gathered that immense volume of force which we call the renascence and drove it forward with well-nigh ungovernable speed. It is astonishing that literature should have been able to cope with this torrential energy of thought and discovery and conserve it with little loss for later times. But literature faced the task and mounted with its opportunity. Faustus and Bacon took all knowledge for their province, Spenser all ethic and political art, Shakespeare plumbed the profoundest depths of human passion, groping for the point where the endurance of the spirit breaks before accumulated ills, discovering in his quest the unsuspected grandeurs which trials reveal in men. The driving forces were many. First, the revival of learning, in its twofold aspect, the unfolding of ancient civilisations, and the stimulation of native literary endeavour. The vision of civilisations like

those of Greece and Rome, the work of men's hands, based on beauty and harmony, and on law and order, made people question the medieval organisation based on traditions of the Church, tyrannous and indisputable. People enquired into the axioms of this philosophy and found them too full of assumptions; they called in the senses to adjust the distortions of the scholastic vision. Hence, in Bacon, the foundations of science, and the revolt of the early freethinkers and speculative pioneers, such as Giordano Bruno, Ralegh, and Marlowe. Marlowe's *Faustus* is the expression of the desire of the Elizabethan mind for untried fields. Invaluable MSS., sole repositories of the records of older civilisations, were being expounded by Greek doctors in Italian city-states, the magnet of all Europe. An honoured line of English scholars taught the new doctrines in the universities, men like Grocyn, Linacre, and Colet at Oxford, Erasmus, Cheke, and Ascham at Cambridge. The other power which the renascence exercised as a creative stimulant was due to its coming to us coloured by Italian writers; its wealth of learning, art, story, music, state-policy, philosophy, as well as of vice, was brought over by diplomats, men of the world, and courtiers. Adherents of learning, strictly as learning, hated Italianate culture, and there were persistent attempts by rigid classicists to fetter it. Ascham proffered his hard dry Hellenism; Sidney, a drama "climbing to the height of Seneca his style"; Gabriel Harvey, a metrical scheme borrowed directly from classical exemplars. Through all this, the romantic impulse, at first fretting, finally burst forth in such Elizabethan restatements of the classics as Chapman's *Iliad*, and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander;*

in drama, untrammelled by any canons (except in the case of Ben Jonson, who welcomed them); in the wave-like independence and diversity of Spenser's stanzas; and in the golden treasure of harmony which Marlowe conjured from his new blank verse. These writers flung off the classical tradition; but the debt to Italy in thought and form grew larger with each new writer. The second of these rejuvenating forces was the Reformation (coming in by a "side door" finally, but inevitable since Wyclif), with all its conflict and stimulus to freedom, on which followed the religious compromise of Elizabeth. Out of this came the eloquence of the Anglican divines on the one hand, and, on the other, the militant inarticulate rebelling of nonconformity; for, though there were pamphlets in plenty in England—witness the Marprelate campaign—it was abroad that the new theology was elaborated in Calvin's *Institutes*, 1536. In 1563 came Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the treasury of anti-papist animus. The third force was the Tudor monarchy, with its ingenious but effective diplomacy, beginning now to tell heavily in the councils of Europe. With characteristic astuteness, it established an absolute sovereignty, at the same time making an appeal to the nation's affections which became an almost fevered and uncontrollable patriotism when Elizabeth turned to it for support. This was the real bond which held together the activities of Drake and his freebooters, Spenser and the poets, Hooker and the divines; at its bidding, men saddled themselves with tasks like Drayton's *Poly-Olbion;* and the chronicle play, a purely English offshoot of the drama, has no other origin. Fourth, there is the new epoch of

adventurous voyaging and world discovery, whose prose epic was written by Hakluyt, and whose effects are plain in Chapman's *De Guiana* and in *The Tempest.* The centre of humanity shifted from the narrow bounds of the Mediterranean (discovery falsified the very name), and England's naval war was fought in the Atlantic, for the prize of the riches of Eldorado, richer, in the sequel, in letters than in treasure. Fifth, science struggled for truth, and, in spite of some early setbacks and envious hostility, contrived to inspect the processes of nature and unravel some of its mystery. Galileo's *E pur si muove* was the motto of the conquering doctrine of Copernicus as against the fated, though picturesque, errors of Ptolemy. Systematised experimental science begins with Bacon. Finally, to serve as bulwark for all that had been won against such an inundation as had swept Greek civilisation from memory, there had come the introduction of printing, 1476, and the rapid distribution of books.

Medieval survivals

The Middle Ages did not, however, disappear in a cataclysm; many things had in them the seeds of evolution and still bear fruit. The Middle Ages and the renascence overlap in Chaucer, who, at his greatest, is a humanist, though not a scholarly one, and was acknowledged by the Elizabethans. There are filaments between medieval Provence and Petrarch, the pervading influence in Elizabethan lyric. Sackville, a true poet, though he deserted the muses for politics, exemplifies the new imagination at work within old forms. His *Induction* and *Complaint of Buckingham* in the otherwise dreary *Mirror for Magistrates,* 1559–

63 (a continuation in rime royal of Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*) have grandeur and power, especially in portraying the gallery of allegorical shades, to whose abode, Dante-like, he is led by Sorrow. He is a strong, sombre genius, with more poetry in reserve than all the fifteenth century poets had ever exercised. Spenser, too, is an allegorist, and uses for his "dark conceit" feudal chivalry, like that of Sidney; his pageant of the seven deadly sins (Marlowe has one, too) is archaic like some of the ingredients of his dialect. He brought over to the new age what has been the perpetual rival of classicism in England, the love of legend. Henry V prays like a medieval churchman, and the pictures of the world of spirits in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are formed by popular religious fears and hopes. The folk-lore and fairy world and the legendary British history of Shakespeare hark back to these earlier centuries. Finally, popular tastes in jest, song, and drama were formed in the Middle Ages, and traditions as deep-seated as these were bound to shape in some way the practice of those who appealed to this wide audience.

The impetus of the renascence is continuous and fairly homogeneous from Sir Thomas Wyatt to the death of Milton; but we may allow ourselves a breathing space in the survey of this long period at the end of the reign of James I, taking the prose, verse, and drama of Elizabeth and James, and then the prose and verse of the Caroline and Commonwealth periods, indicating, on the way, the change of temper which took place in the early years of the seventeenth century.

2. Poetry to the Death of James I

The age was prolific both in poetry and prose, but, in excellence and variety, the accomplishment in poetry is the higher; only outlines of the record can be given. Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, scholars and diplomats, pretending that their art was but a pastime, were the pioneers of the Italian fashions in verse; they were called the "courtly makers." Wyatt naturalised the sonnet form, and with it came the necessity for standardising accent, and for settling the question of the inflectional *-e*. The subject, ornament, and much of the phrasing of Wyatt's and many following sonnets come from Petrarch; unrequited passion and the lover's melancholy are the gist of most of them. But Wyatt's lyrics for the lute have a more direct sincerity and a studious art. He was, moreover, one of the few in England who caught the strain of Horatian satire. Surrey was a lesser man, but, profiting by the experience of Wyatt, he proved a more graceful writer; he struck out the sonnet form of three quatrains and a couplet, but used only three rimes to Shakespeare's seven; a more historic innovation was the blank verse measure, clumsy though it was, in which he translated Books II and IV of the *Æneid*. Neither Wyatt nor Surrey published any writings, but an astute bookseller, Richard Tottel, gathered their work, together with other courtly poems, into his miscellany, *Songs and Sonnets*, 1557.

The interval between Surrey and Spenser is void of any great poetical product; but, meanwhile, two things call for notice: first, the experimenters, Turber-

vile, Googe, Churchyard, Whetstone, Tusser, a versifier of agricultural lore, and Gascoigne, only the last calling for remark; his versatile experimenting included a prose comedy from Ariosto, *The Supposes*, 1566, *Jocasta*, a blank verse Senecan play, a satire in the same measure, *The Steel Glass*, 1576, and an essay on English verse, *Notes of Instruction;* secondly, the increasing influence of the *Pléiade*, the academic poets of the French renascence, Du Bellay, Desportes, Ronsard, on the development of the sonnet.

The sonneteers

The fashion of the sonnet sequence, derived from Petrarch's *Laura*, had enormous sway in England as abroad; one of the earliest disciples was Sir Philip Sidney, whose *Astrophel and Stella*, 1580–4, was addressed to Penelope Devereux, sister of Queen Elizabeth's Essex, and, afterwards, Lady Rich; in sincerity, Sidney had few rivals, and he employs the conventional form with unusual grace, but it is not often that he can fuse it to the glow of passion. The series, more than a hundred in number, contains some exalted religious feeling. Watson, a secondary person, wrote his *Hekatompathia* or *Passionate Century of Sonnets*, 1582, in eighteen-lined stanzas, showing how loosely the word sonnet was used by the Elizabethans; he advertises the source of all his material in preliminary prose paragraphs.

Spenser, in his *Amoretti*, 1595, possibly addressed to his wife, falls far below the passionate adoration of his *Epithalamium;* his sonnets are mannered and full of conceits; the best of them involve his Platonic doctrine of beauty; he made, characteristically, some metrical innovations. Other poets, Barnes, Constable,

Lodge, Fulke Greville, Daniel, and Drayton—these last two rising once or twice, in *Delia* and *Idea* respectively, to the heights of inspiration,—attempted the form, as did Sir William Alexander and Drummond of Hawthornden in the reign of James. The sonnet came to be used as an introduction to other poetic ventures, and the best in this kind is Ralegh's preface to *The Faerie Queene*. But all these are utterly outdistanced by the sonnets of Shakespeare, written, probably, between 1590 and 1600, though not published till 1609. They raise unsolved problems—how far do they mirror actual events? who are the *dramatis personæ?* do they bear any relation to the changed tone of the plays about 1600? Though, to some extent, they draw on the common fund of renascence ornament, they are written with less conscious artifice; the sinister history of twofold treachery and resignation is revealed with stirrings of passion, with subtle shades of emotion, from the deepest shame to exultant triumph, which give it a moving power not found elsewhere. The sequence has some motives common to all; the havoc wrought by time and decay upon beauty, and the vaunt of the eternising power of verse are familiar themes; but, whether in treating of these or of the poignant bitter story, the lines have a wealth of natural imagery, a rich sonorous harmony, a mastery of vowel-sound and alliteration, in short, a variety of music and mood which preserves them alone among all the sonnet sequences from the charges of unreality and monotony.

Lyric, like the sonnet, is apt to draw on French and Italian sources, but its triumphs are vastly

more numerous. Some breath laden with the pollen of lyrical fertility swept across the age. There is the graceful trilling of artificial notes by Greene, Dekker, Peele, Breton, and Lodge, whose songs are too impersonal to be distinguished from one another; the more closely observed nature, the finer music, the perfect emotional truth of the songs of Shakespeare, deftly modulated in the larger harmony of the plays; the polished classical art, wanting only in spontaneity, of Ben Jonson, whose successor is Thomas Campion, a master, as his *Four Books of Airs* prove, of rime, metre, and lyric diction as well as of music; there are also the admonitory stanzas of Dyer, Wotton, and Daniel; the lofty insolence of Ralegh; the pastorals of Marlowe and Drayton, who is also the best of the patriotic balladists. Of the numerous lyric miscellanies, only two can be named, *England's Helicon*, 1600, and Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*, 1602; of the song-books, only the madrigals of Wilbye and the songs for the lute of Byrd and Dowland, wherein is the keenest rivalry between exquisite words and melodious tunes. The relations between Elizabethan music and lyric poetry await further study.

Lyric

This brief chronicle of sonnet and lyric has carried us past the date of Edmund Spenser, 1552–99, whose independently published work begins with *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579, by which time he had shaken off the heresies about classical metres in English propagated at Cambridge by his pedantic friends, Abraham Fraunce and Gabriel Harvey. These *Eclogues* of the months turn back to Theocritus, Vergil, Mantuanus, Sannazaro, and Marot;

Spenser

the conventional pastoral pretence is employed on divers themes, love-lays, allegorical fables, church-controversy, a plea for poetry, a verse-contest, love-complaints (against his first and unresponsive love Rosalind), and the praise of Elizabeth. But it was chiefly the metrical versatility and unwonted musical skill of the idylls that won for him the title, "the new poet." The archaic speech was condemned now by Sidney and afterwards by Ben Jonson, but Spenser never abandoned it. Courtly office was found for him in 1580 as secretary to Lord Grey de Wilton in Ireland. There he wrote the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*, on whose publication Ralegh, a neighbour of Spenser in Ireland, insisted in 1590. Meanwhile, he was working out for himself a moral philosophy of which one element, Platonism as expounded by the Italian humanist Ficino, may be discerned in his early *Hymns to Love* and *Beauty;* while the other element, Christian doctrine, may be seen blended with Platonism in the later *Hymns to Heavenly Love* and *Heavenly Beauty;* all four were published together in 1596. But the full harvest of his genius is garnered in the romantic allegorical epic, *The Faerie Queene;* of this, Books I–III were published in 1590, Books IV–VI in 1596, and the complete form, including the stanzas on mutability in the fragmentary Book VII, in 1609. The intention of Spenser was "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline"; and this he achieves by the spirit of his work, though not by his detail. His method was a continued "dark conceit" or allegory, and in this he fails; for the allegory is discontinuous, and the appearances of

Prince Arthur (representative of the comprehensive virtue of magnanimity) have not the binding effect that Spenser designed. For the most part he modelled the narrative on Ariosto, though deriving his sixth book from Malory; the religious and crusading tone owes something to his Italian contemporary Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata.* But the figures in *The Faerie Queene* are not the romantic knights errant of Ariosto, nor the crusaders of Tasso, but personified virtues, Biblical, Platonic, and Aristotelian, to wit, Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy; upon these shadowy figures he confers titles such as The Red Cross Knight, Sir Guyon, and the like. He projected twenty-four books treating the twelve private and the twelve political virtues in this manner; only the first six books have come down to us. The conflicts, perils, and adventures are very much like those of the romances, and they go on before a scenic background of the poet's own elaboration. The scheme was ambitious like most Elizabethan schemes, but Spenser had little constructive skill; he lets the story drift, interrupts it with delightful but inconsequent episodes, and, worse still, he confuses the allegorical plan. Sometimes, he is portraying the conflict between truth and falsehood, sometimes, between Mary and Elizabeth, sometimes, between, Protestantism and Rome, sometimes, between England and Spain. Then, again, the knightly mask and armour and titles may be stripped from the abstract virtues and disconcertingly fitted to real persons; thus, Duessa may be theological error, or Mary Queen of Scots; and Prince Arthur may be Sidney, or Leicester, or Grey de Wilton; or one

person may figure in several guises, as Queen Elizabeth, who is the fairy queen, as well as Belphœbe and Britomart. We watch an unending series of metamorphoses. To go to Spenser as we might to Bunyan for clear narrative and easily translatable allegory is to go in vain; his strength, as we shall see, lies elsewhere, in his lofty spiritual inspiration and in his art. In any scene drawn from the real world it would be impossible to persuade us of the co-existence of beings brought from the diverse realms of romance, Protestant theology, neo-Platonism, contemporary history, legendary lore, and classical mythology. The poet does not attempt it; he folds their hard outlines about with the softening veil of allegory and presents them in pageants and processions, in a dream atmosphere and enchanted landscape, in golden noon, or starlit night, or in magical forests, often near the sound of waters, which, with the perfumed air, lulls all incredulity; or he may establish them in the more firm and solid caves, like those of Mammon and Despair, or pleasaunces like the Bower of Acrasia, where a wonderful dreamy activity pervades the scene. This art, which weaves words and rhythms into pictures, is one great quality of Spenser's genius.

Though Spenser usually took refuge in allegory and disguise, he was not incapable of dealing with life at first hand, as we may see in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, treating of affairs in the Netherlands, and the drastic proposals for the harrying of Ireland in his prose *View of the present State of Ireland*. His *Complaints*, 1591, again, contain, besides the delightful *Muiopotmos* and some elegiac poems like *The Ruins of Time*, *Prosopopoia*, or *Mother Hub-*

berd's Tale, a sarcastic delineation of the intrigues of court and church. He often laments the low estate and mean rewards of poetry now that politicians of the type of Burleigh have succeeded Sidney. His picture of the ignominy of the suppliant at court, in *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, 1591, is based on observation and bitter experience. By virtue of these realistic things, he takes a high place among Elizabethan satirists. Yet love and beauty drew from him his richest music; when he sings most exquisitely, as in his perfect marriage songs, *Epithalamium* and *Prothalamium*, no tone of cynicism or harsh note of any kind mars their wonderful melody.

Besides his skill in word-painting, and his unwavering fidelity to the poet's creed of beauty, we should note how his spirit is stirred by the nobler aspects of all the activities of his day; his verse refines them all; heroic adventure, patriotic fervour, queen-worship, puritan exaltation of truth, each yields a finer essence to him to blend with the chivalric temper of which his friend Sidney was the supreme exemplar. Finally, we may note his command of his medium of music, rhythm, and stanza form; in the technical skill which distils the utmost subtlety, grace, and strength of expression from sound, he is one of the great masters; the Spenserian stanza (a nine-lined stanza, of which the chief features are the riming bridge at the fourth and fifth lines, and the closing alexandrine) is only the most triumphant among many experiments; its later history has been honourable, for it served as a channel of romance to the arid tracts of eighteenth century poetry. Keats, Byron, and Shelley and many more poured

their music into it; it is our greatest stanzaic measure.

The poetry of the age is "thick inlaid" with mythological allusion, and there are many poems retelling mythological tales. The first of real mark is Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, in which the gracious, passionate story is told with a purity of imagination to which neither Chapman's continuation of the poem nor Shakespeare's two ventures in classic legend, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, 1593–4, ever quite attain; Lodge's *Glaucus and Scylla*, 1589, and the anonymous *Britain's Ida*, are surpassed by Drayton's *Endymion and Phœbe*, 1594, a piece of splendid pastoral pageantry on the legend of the moon-goddess. Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* comes late in the same school. With these, we may name the translators of classical and Italian verse. Stanyhurst's ridiculous hexametric *Vergil*, 1582, could not displace Phaer's version, 1560, in "fourteeners," the measure employed by Arthur Golding in his popular and much-used *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, 1567, and in the vastly greater work of George Chapman, the *Iliad*, 1598–1611. Chapman's *Odyssey*, 1616, was written, for some reason, in heroic couplets, which do not so well recover the pace and energy of the original; both the translations are Elizabethan in their elaborate and frequently ingenious phrasing and in their expansions of the original. A comparison of Chapman, Pope, Cowper, and Lang and Leaf in their treatment of Homer would throw much light on the changing current of literary taste. George Sandys the traveller did the *Metamorphoses* again into couplets, 1621. These are by no means all the classical

Mythological poems

Translations

translators, and the industry was so widespread that it sought its raw material in France, Spain, and Italy as well. Sir John Harrington made a courtly version of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, 1591; Edward Fairfax admirably translated Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* in 1600; Joshua Sylvester's feebly fluent *Divine Weeks and Works*, 1590–2, from Du Bartas, had wide influence down to Milton's age.

Religious and philosophical poems

The group of philosophical and religious poets sounds a note which becomes more insistent in the sequel; Drummond of Hawthornden's religious sonnets, *Flowers of Sion*, 1623, illustrate the transition in temper. Before them come Sir John Davies's *Orchestra*, 1596, in which the movements of the planets, the sea, and human affairs are poetically symbolised in a harmonious dance; and the quatrains of his *Nosce Teipsum*, 1598, which, with Dryden-like clearness of verse-argument, discusses the immortality of the soul and the intimate union of soul and body. Fulke Greville's rigidly intellectual poems, *Of Humane Knowledge*, *Of Monarchy*, not published till 1633, are too formidable; something of the same quality marks Chapman's *Tears of Peace;* the praise of learning in it is noble, but it is "craggy" and rather apt to "break" than refresh the mind. Robert Southwell, the poet of the Roman Catholic religion in Elizabeth's days, gives fire by his devotion to the curious conceits and fancies in his *Saint Peter's Complaint*, 1615.

John Donne

The figure of the most profound originality in this group and this age is John Donne, most of whose writings were posthumously published in 1633. *Elegies*, *Satires* (described

below), verse *Letters* and *Songs* are all distinguished by the spirit of rebellion, the intensest thrill of emotion, subtlety of intellect, and lightning flashes of brilliant phrasing. He rebelled against the long imitative tradition of the Petrarchans; he could no more speak simply of love, like Burns, than they; but he replaced their fine-spun sentiment, worn thin through age-long use, by feeling which retains the furnace heat of experience, animal passion, or an over-intellectualised contempt for women. In general, he is the poet of the metaphysics of sex, moving more rarely on normal levels as in his most exquisite song, "Sweetest love, I do not go." For the ritualised diction of the Petrarchans, with its circulating catalogue of simile and mythological allusion, he substituted a speech in the main strong and rugged rather than poetical (though often achieving splendid rhythm and colour), and metaphors and parallels drawn from mathematics, alchemy, law, scholasticism, and from the most prosaic and unpromising affairs of every day. Carew crystallised the judgment of his time about Donne in his lines, "A king that ruled . . . the universal monarchy of wit." Wit, the fiery rapidity of thought and the swift summoning of some image, bizarre but fitting, from his richly-stored erudition, might well be the possession of one who passed from the Roman to the Anglican Church, a master of both their theologies. This mental gymnastic contributed to the characteristic "metaphysical" blend of passion and intellectual ingenuity whether of forensic argument or far-sought conceit which may be seen in the haunting fragment, *The Progress of the Soul*, and the extravagantly eulo-

gistic elegies, with outbursts of magnificent poetry, entitled *An Anatomy of the World.* Neither his intense individuality, nor the imagination which peers into the backward and abysm of things and is shadowed by the thought of death, could be passed on to his followers; but some habits natural to him became, in them, mere conceits and fantastic ingenuities which were duly castigated in Johnson's *Life of Cowley.* These habits are characteristic of both the secular and the religious "metaphysicals," the latter taking their origin from Donne's *Divine Poems,* written when the insolent libertinism of youth had given way to the ascetic devotion of the Dean of St. Paul's, Donne having by this time been rewarded with belated office in the Church.

Another group includes patriotic chroniclers in verse, for prose, verse, and drama all take heavy toll of this material. After Spenser, the first of them is William Warner, whose *Albion's England,* 1586–1602, is a history of the usual uncritical kind from the Flood to his own day. Its rugged fourteen-syllabled lines are not often poetic nor is its narrative skill very remarkable; it is saved by its patriotism. Peele has his famous *Farewell to Norris and Drake,* 1589, and Fitzgeffrey his classically adorned elegy on Drake, 1596. Romance and chronicle meet in "well-languaged" Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond,* 1592–1623; chronicle and reflection are the substance of his *Civil Wars,* 1595–1623, fluent, distinguished, but unexciting. *Tethys' Festival* is the finest of the masques he wrote for the Queen between 1604 and 1610. His patriotic enthusiasm is stirred to its most powerful expression

Patriotism. Daniel

in *Musophilus*, 1599, in praise of learning, with an inspired prophecy of the triumphs of English speech; his vein of high-minded morality runs through *Ulysses and the Siren*, and the gravely dignified *Epistle to the Lady Margaret*. Musical grace, a noble austerity of temper, a fine taste in diction, and a slight want of robustness characterise Samuel Daniel;

Drayton

his contemporary, and, in some things, pupil, Michael Drayton, enriched and polished his talent through a lifetime's assiduous exercise, passing from an earlier heaviness of matter and style to the levity, suppleness, and metrical ease of *Nimphidia*, 1627, a source book of fairy lore to Herrick. His *Barons' Wars*, 1603, and *Poly-Olbion*, 1613–22, are pious tributes to England, immense in scale, especially the *Poly-Olbion;* its thirty songs in twelve-syllabled riming lines survey the counties, hills, streams, sports, legends, and historic moments of England; the learned notes which accompany them are by the scholar and antiquary John Selden. Like Daniel, Drayton blends together romance and chronicle in *England's Heroical Epistles*, 1597–1605 (based on Ovid's *Heroides*), letters of lovers of exalted rank, suggestive of their time and circumstance, expressing real passion, and using the heroic couplet with ease and vigour. His sonnet-sequence *Idea* has been named; his concern with the stage was unprofitable, and his satires are almost negligible; but his *Odes*, pastorals in *The Muses' Elizium*, 1630, and *Dowsabel* snatch a grace beyond the reach of his own art. His *Odes* have metrical range and a sure felicity; his mock gallantry anticipates Suckling; his *Ballad of Agincourt* sets a standard, only attained by *Henry V*, of

patriotic exaltation. The incessant industry, the varied accomplishment, and the Roman massiveness of Drayton make him the most typical of Elizabethan poets.

The Spenserians

The pastoral writers are numerous; besides those named as lyrists, George Wither wrote his *Shepherd's Hunting*, 1615, and *Philarete*, 1622, and William Browne of Tavistock, *Britannia's Pastorals*, 1613–5, describing, in graceful limpid couplets, country scenes, sometimes simple, sometimes ornate, but less literary than those of his master Spenser; he is a pale anticipatory shadow of Keats. Spenser's mantle of allegory fell upon the shoulders of the Fletchers, cousins of John Fletcher, the dramatist. The elder brother, Phineas, wrote *Piscatory Eclogues*, a novel and agreeable form of pastoral; but more famous is *The Purple Island* (not published till 1633). In this poem, Phineas (like Giles in *Christ's Victory*) tampered with the Spenserian stanza. *The Purple Island* is an over-elaborate allegory of the human body as an island; the faculties of the mind are treated as inhabitants; and the whole is rounded off with a warfare of vices and virtues, not unlike Bunyan's Mansoul; except in its pedantic plan, the work is poetical, being rich in melody and imagery, though often defaced by an excess of conceit. Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victory and Triumph*, 1610, an epic of the redemption, links Spenser and Milton; the description of the Bower of Vain Delight is not unworthy of Spenser's Bower of Acrasia, while Milton's *Paradise Regained*, of about the same length as Fletcher's poem, owes much to some of the temptations de-

scribed in it, besides the picture of Satan as an "aged sire." Henry More's *Philosophical Poems*, 1647, and Joseph Beaumont's *Psyche*, 1648, carry on the Spenserian tradition in thought and verse, with an ever-growing tendency to abstraction and neoplatonism; they belong to the influential school of Cambridge Platonists.

Satire

Post-renascence satire begins tentatively with Wyatt; Spenser's *Mother Hubberd's Tale* and *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* are born of genuine indignation, as are the satires of Ben Jonson. Much Elizabethan satire is of the nature of the "character" in verse; Joseph Hall claimed priority for his *Virgidemiarum*, 1597; Lodge's *A Fig for Momus*, 1589, Marston's *Satires*, 1598, Guilpin's *Skialethia*, and Donne's *Satires*, published 1633, are all written in heroic couplets with a rough unmusical cadence of which the general explanation is that poets were taught by Persius to regard it as the inevitable medium for satire; Juvenal is also a much followed model. Donne alone has the genius to make his characters memorable; the acid of contempt bites the lines of his portraits deep into the plate. But, speaking generally, besides their obvious immaturity, these satires suffer through the lack of large inspiring interests, such as Dryden's politics, and Pope's solicitude for the dignity of letters.

3. Prose to the Death of James I

We may classify the prose of the time under the following headings.

Sir Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, 1516 (in English,

1551), shows the rare constructive dissatisfaction which figures forth ideal commonwealths, combined with the still rarer grip of facts which makes his book a social prophecy, still awaiting reasonable fulfilment, of communal possession, universal labour, religious toleration, even-handed justice, and healthful contentment. Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's tutor, published in 1545 his *Toxophilus*, a eulogy of archery, with many asides; and, in 1570, the *Schoolmaster*, discussing classical learning—Italian he hated—sport, the means to make education palatable, and the making of character. He sets down his very sane conclusions in a plain prose which purposely avoids the ink-horn terms rife in fifteenth century verse and prose. Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Books I–IV, 1594) is a defence of the Anglican position against the Roman Catholic and the Puritan; its stately rhetoric and rhythmic periods assert with wide philosophical grasp the universal prevalence of law. Hooker rescued theology from the menace of narrowness by his liberal interpretation of the relations between natural law and the divine law of the Scriptures.

1. Education and government

The contradictions in the character of Francis Bacon, 1561–1626, come to light, on the one hand, in his impeachment for corruption, and, on the other, in the vast conquests he projected for science. In *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605, afterwards expanded in the Latin *De Augmentiis Scientiarum*, 1623, he surveys all knowledge, mapping out three provinces, memory, imagination, and reason; in the Latin

2. Philosophy

Bacon

Novum Organum, he tracks down the idols (or phantoms) of the tribe, the den, the market-place, and the theatre; next he proposes to interrogate nature by the method of systematic induction, as opposed to the scholastic way of formal deduction. *Novum Organum* is the part brought nearest to perfection of *Instauratio Magna*, Bacon's vast dream of the development of science, through the stages of experiment, ascertainment of causes, and prophetic theory, to the final record of all attainable knowledge. It is true that Bacon himself was not a very accurate observer, that he lagged behind the scientific knowledge of his time, and that his method of inquiry has been superseded; yet it was he who definitely turned the tide of investigation from medieval to modern methods. The *Essays*, ten in 1597, thirty-eight in 1612, fifty-eight in 1625, are, however, Bacon's securest title to literary fame. They owe something to Montaigne, but, in place of a leisured abundance, they have, in the typical instances, a terse compact brevity, the result of a long process of sifting. They may be divided into those in which he speaks as politician and statesman (here he is indebted to Plutarch and Machiavelli); as moralist and adviser; and as thinker and imaginative writer. His prudence and sagacity, though of the earth earthy, are almost unassailable. His devotion to the cause of knowledge is that of a supreme idealist: "he moved the intellects which moved the world." Nevertheless, in more human relationships his mental force and subtlety are mated curiously with emotional poverty. His prose has great pliancy; some essays are in the periodic sentence of complex structure, some in his "folded enigmatical way,"

balanced clauses accumulating sometimes three deep. His pages are studded with salient anecdote, quotation, and misquotation, especially from the Roman world, Bacon's model in antiquity. At their best, they have a magisterial fulness of thought, a splendour of rhythmic art, an economy of wording, and an arresting quality of figurative statement far outweighing their lack of orderliness and coherence; not many things with so many imperfections upon them are so freely admitted to be classic. *The New Atlantis* is Bacon's version of Utopia. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621, groups its encyclopædic learning about the symptoms of melancholy; it is a mine of bookish wit, of modern and antique instances, of scholarlike irony and humour, and its sentences are stiff with Latin quotations; it could only have been produced in an age before experimental science had won its footing. Feltham's *Resolves*, 1620, are like diluted *Essays* of Bacon.

3. History, chronicle, and travel

More's *History of Richard III* and Bacon's *Henry VII* are both weighty historical studies of the newer trustworthy kind which may be contrasted with the older chronicle type in Ralegh's *History of the World*, only memorable now for some passages of a sonorous gloomy eloquence. Holinshed and Speed are less truthful than Camden, whose more critical *Britannia* is in Latin. Stow was the careful chronicler of London, as Harrison, in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, was of English life in town and country. Hakluyt, in his *Principal Navigations*, 1589–1600, was the enthusiastic editor of travellers' tales of voyagers and buccaneers, and, in some subtle way, his direct un-

adorned prose conveys perfectly the sense of action, adventure, and colonisation on the Spanish Main and in the north-west passage. His work was continued by Samuel Purchas in his *Pilgrimage*, 1613. Coryat's *Crudities*, 1611, are European travel-notes, unpretentious and amusing.

4. Criticism

Criticism is afoot, as may be seen in Webbe's *Discourse of English Poetry*, 1586, and Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie*, 1589. Gosson's *School of Abuse*, 1579, provoked Sidney, in the next year, to write his *Apology*, which was published posthumously in 1595. Sidney enthrones poetry high above philosophy and history, repelling the puritan assault on the worth and delight of poetry and drama, and, through all the controversy, keeping an alert ear for the true ring of poetry in *Chevy Chase*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the "new poet's" *Shepherd's Calendar*. But Sidney holds fast to his learning, upholds the unities and the Senecan drama, and condemns by forecast the romantic school; in 1580, we must remember, there was nothing to show that it had any capacity for grandeur. His prose has the clear eloquence and felicity of phrasing of his poetry. Daniel for, and Campion against (though he was an exquisite rimer himself), debated the question of rime. Bacon philosophised about poetry in *De Augmentiis*, and Ben Jonson, in the brief paragraphs of his *Discoveries*, 1641, uttered pregnant criticism of Bacon and Shakespeare, and added to the vocabulary of criticism a terminology derived from Roman rhetoricians.

The novel, already past its zenith in Italy, makes an abortive beginning in England with Lyly's *Euphues*,

1579, and *Euphues and his England*, didactic tales through which move the shadows of renascence youth, discussing at length and often shrewdly the point of honour, the purpose of education, the durability of passion, friendship, and atheism, in a tone addressed to the ladies of Elizabeth's court. Here, Euphuism—a style already embryonic in Berners's and North's translations of Guevara's *Dial of Princes*, and in Pettie's *Petite Palace of Pleasure*, 1576, a compilation of tales—develops to maturity, to be quickly followed by senility and ridicule. Euphuism gets its artificial emphasis by repetition, antithesis, alliteration, rhetorical questioning, thickly strewn mythological anecdote, and analogies drawn from a fantastic natural history. It served Falstaff as stuff for parody, Drayton attacked it, and Sidney rejected some of its extravagances in his more human and graceful pastoral romance *Arcadia;* still, its mannered, disciplined style played a part in providing a technique of prose. Before the fashion was spent, Greene wrote *Pandosto* in the same medium and Lodge *Rosalynde*. Greene then turned to his series of "coney-catching" exposures, in the wake of Harman's *Caveat for Vagabonds*, and Dekker followed suit with his *Gull's Horn Book*, 1609. Nashe, the typical Elizabethan journalist, broke in with his vivid, picaresque tale, *Jack Wilton*. Deloney wrote novels of craftsmen and apprentices. These romantic and realistic stories correspond in a rough way to the romances and *fabliaux* of the Middle Ages. Here must be named the species of writing known as *Characters*, derived ultimately from Theophrastus. Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters* are surpassed in

5. The Novel

their witty observation and analytic delineation of types by Earle's *Microcosmographie*, 1628; the vein is exhausted in the prose characters of Butler, author of *Hudibras*. It may faintly have influenced the course of the novel.

6. Pamphleteering

Pamphleteering became an enormous industry. The *Martin Marprelate* controversy stands out by reason of the vigour of the assailants, the romantic history of its perambulating press, the fact that bishops were obliged to call in professional aid and that puritanism here gave its solitary evidence of a capacity for humour: the prelates undoubtedly had the worst of it.

7. Translators

Sidney always carried abroad with him Hoby's translation, 1561, of Castiglione's *Courtier*, the first of many "courtier books"; the scholarly and industrious Philemon Holland translated, about 1600, among other things, Livy and Plutarch's *Morals*. In four notable cases, translators proved themselves competent to distil into English, taking no thought for slavish accuracy, the full flavour of great originals; these are North's Plutarch's *Lives*, 1579, from the French of Amyot, Florio's *Montaigne*, 1603, Shelton's *Don Quixote*, 1612, and, much later, Urquhart's *Rabelais*, 1653.

Of all this multifarious prose, rhetorical, ceremonious, exotic, compact, colloquial, over-Latinised, or eccentric, we may remark three things. First, that no one has yet appeared to serve as a model in syntax and diction, though Ben Jonson came near to it. Secondly, that it brought much grist to Shakespeare's mill: Holinshed, North's *Plutarch*, the collections of novels, Greene's *Pandosto* (the source of *The*

Winter's Tale), Lodge's *Rosalynde* (the source of *As You Like It*), and Montaigne are all contributors to him in different measures. Thirdly, of this type of mannered prose, when encumbrances have been brushed away, thought clarified, and imagination infused, Shakespeare himself is the real master in the dialogue of his plays between 1594 and 1604.

4. The Drama

Origins

The origins of Elizabethan drama lie far back in the liturgy of the Church; there are hardly any traces of classical drama in the Middle Ages, though there are spectacular and faintly dramatic elements in popular carnivals, sword-dances, and may-dances. But the Church, by converting the services for Easter and Christmas into visual representations, with, at first, antiphonal song, and, later, vernacular dialogue, gave birth to the drama destined to maturity in Shakespeare's plays. These liturgical plays date from the eleventh century; they centred about the sepulchre and the manger, and were acted by priests in the church or with its walls for a background. By steps which we cannot precisely date, (i) the subjects were extended till they came to include all the Bible story (strictly called mystery plays) and saints' legends (strictly miracle plays, though this word is applied to both kinds in England). (ii) They passed out of the hands of the Church into those of the corporations, who were in the habit of presenting them by the aid of the craft-guilds long before 1378; occasionally, though not regularly, a guild took an

Miracle plays

incident appropriate to its trade, as Cana, in the case of the Vintners. (iii) These plays, on many incidents of Scripture story, legend, and even devotional literature, were gathered into cycles and played on Corpus Christi Day, and often on succeeding days, replacing, or going on concurrently with, the processions which celebrated the feast. Most towns had cycles, and they were often represented on a number of two-storied wheeled stages or "pagonds" which passed in succession round the town to different groups of spectators. Many details of cost and policing remain in municipal records, but only five main cycles are preserved in MSS., generally of the fifteenth century. Those of York number forty-eight, of Wakefield (the Towneley mysteries) thirty-two, of Chester twenty-five; there are, besides, the Cornish cycle in dialect, and a less dramatic group, wrongly called of Coventry. They are in all kinds of measures, chiefly lyrical stanzas: all are anonymous, but very memorable are those written by one of the Towneley authors, who uses a singular stanza and who, in the episodes of Cain, of Noah, and of Mak the sheep-stealer, has telling realism and rich humour; these show the secularising and popularising of religious drama proceeding apace. There are, in addition, single plays and fragmentary evidences of non-clerical material, such as plays on Robin Hood.

Morality plays

On the heels of the miracle cycles follow, in the fifteenth century, the moral, or, using the French word, morality, plays, manifesting the taste of the time for allegory. The *Castle of Perseverance*, the first of them extant, dates about 1430, and they continue their

course for a century and a half alongside the miracle play, being enacted, however, on a stationary stage. Later examples are Skelton's *Magnificence*, 1516(?) and the impressive *Everyman*, in which man, summoned by Death to judgment, is deserted by Fellowship, Jollity, Strength, Pleasure, and Beauty, and accompanied only by the meagre phantom of his Good Deeds. Moralities are all variations of a common theme, the struggle for man's soul by personified vices and virtues. Whereas the miracle play told the long history from creation to judgment in prescribed scriptural sequence, the moral play introduced the idea of conflict, invented its stories, and designed emblematic characters, counterbalancing these advances by falling back for a while upon lifeless personifications. Some show of comedy was made out of the vice, said to be the progenitor of the Shakespearean fool.

Interludes

Next came the stage of the interlude, a dialogue between characters, in which the morality is shortened for entertainments in banqueting halls, another instance of the influence of the audience in shaping drama; these were played by professional players. Several types of interlude exist: the moral and didactic, such as *Hickscorner*, *c.* 1509; the humanist, such as Rastell's *Four Elements*, *c.* 1515, and the later *Wit and Science;* the controversial, such as those of the "bilious" Protestant John Bale, whose *King John* shows the morality being transformed, very slowly, into the history play; and, fourthly, the farces, much nearer akin to the French *soties*, of John Heywood. His interludes, *The Weather*, *Love*, *Johan Johan*, and the *Four PP*, *c.* 1544, are

witty *fabliau*-like tales, portraying genuine social types and carrying comedy to within reach of classical example.

Classical influence

Classical influence fastens upon comedy and tragedy about the middle of the sixteenth century. In comedy, Terence and Plautus are studied and pillaged; first come schoolmaster dramas (the renascence schools were much given to dramatic production), Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, 1553(?), and Stevenson's *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, *c.* 1550, in which native stuff with some classical character types is roughly divided into acts and scenes. Next follow experimenters such as Gascoigne, Whetstone, and Edwards, whose *Damon and Pythias*, 1564, fuses comedy and tragedy and some degree of characterisation. The kinds welter together; those in popular tradition acted in the open or in inn-yards, and those in classical tradition acted in the inns of court and in the universities; these lead us to the university wits.

In tragedy, humanist influence set the Senecan form as model, as may be seen in Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, 1562, and in Hughes's *Misfortunes of Arthur*, 1587, both presenting matter of British history in classical shape with Senecan accompaniments, ghost, chorus, sententious maxims, and messenger reporting sensational bloodshed; the dumb-shows in *Gorboduc* are not Senecan but Italian.

The plays of the university wits cover the years 1580–92; the first of the wits is John Lyly the Euphuist, among whose eight plays are *Alexander and Campaspe*, in which Alexander the Great gives up Campaspe to the painter Apelles; *Mother Bombie*, in

which native stuff is set in a Terentian frame; *Endymion*, probably a court-allegory of Leicester, as *Midas* is of Philip of Spain; *Gallathea* and some other pastoral masques. His comedies are mostly of persons of quality, whose artificial codes are the material of high comedy; at times, he mixes therewith provincial buffooneries. His witty style and pleasing talk studded with puns and quips often sparkle with sprightly, polished repartee. The influence of these things extends demonstrably to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and, by inference, beyond. It is now thought doubtful whether the lyrics, which do not appear before 1632, can be by Lyly's own hand. His success established prose as the medium for comedy and ensured its discarding the boisterous humour of English tradition in favour of lighter, more graceful, and more intellectual substance. George Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* amends the legend of the three goddesses, and Diana presents the ball of gold to Queen Elizabeth. His scriptural drama of *David and Bethsabe* has much graceful blank verse and a shapely plot; this praise cannot be given to *The Old Wives' Tale*, a farrago of folk-lore and literary satire, which gave Milton hints and figures for his masque of *Comus*. Robert Greene had more original gift; his *Alphonsus* is an imitation of *Tamburlaine; James IV*, in spite of its title, is from a novel of Cinthio; *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* compounds the love affairs of Edward I (as Prince of Wales) and the magic skill of Roger Bacon. Greene has some real passion in the love stories which he exalts to a high place in the dramas, and some simple human feeling, espe-

The university wits

cially in his portrayals of long-suffering women, for whom his own wife may well have sat as a model. Thomas Lodge's Roman play *The Wounds of Civil War* is very tedious; and the brilliant and varied talent of Nashe did not give anything of importance to the stage. Thomas Kyd was not a university man, but, in his *Spanish Tragedy*, a very popular play, he derived material from Seneca; it is an orgy of revenge and bloodshed; but its deeper interest is its resemblance to the plot of *Hamlet*. On the basis of this, and some references of Nashe, has been built the theory that Kyd was the author of the original *Hamlet* which Shakespeare worked over in the quarto of 1603. Kyd may also be credited with some advance in the involution of character and plot. Christopher Marlowe was the only member of the group whose accomplishment passed beyond the tentative; he is the aggressor against "jigging veins," "mother-wits," rime in tragedy, and the "conceits" of "clownage." His brief dramatic career, if it did not found, at any rate confirmed, the obligation to seek the subjects of high tragedy among people of high rank, and amid the "stately tents of war." The ambitious imagination of his irregular genius at first overreached itself; his first play, *Tamburlaine*, 1587, and his *Jew of Malta* (Lamb says of Barabas, in this play, "He kills in sport, poisons whole nunneries, invents infernal machines"), are beyond the confines of likelihood; they portray illimitable lusts, in the one case for conquest, in the other for wealth. The vast outlines of these characters are amazing, but unconvincing: bloodshed and violence usurp the place

Marlowe

of natural motive and action. But, in *Edward II*, which, by its realistic historical basis, compels the poet to concentrate instead of dispersing his forces, and in *Dr. Faustus*, where the overwhelming desire to rifle the hidden treasures of knowledge is a more credible motive, tragedy becomes human; in the case of Faustus, the tragedy is intensified (if we accept the system of belief), by the final forfeiture of his immortal soul. If we regard Marlowe's accepted triumphs, we may see that his intrinsic worth is chiefly associated with two things: first, his mastery of tragic terror, whether "the reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty" in *Edward II* or the agony of the "exactment of his (Faustus's) dire compact"; second, his poetical splendour, those "brave translunary things" which Drayton celebrated; he ranks with Chaucer and Spenser among the great metrical innovators. Through the instrument of blank verse, he uttered strains latent but, as yet, undetected in it by any ear; its various music, its supple submission to all the demands of thought and beauty, provided the means to attempt and accomplish the severest tasks, to chant the loveliness of Helen, to echo the terror of Faustus's last hour, or to ring exultantly with stately names, Usumcasane, Theridamas, Persepolis. This skill made Milton his pupil in verse, as Shakespeare was for the lessons of his early tragedy in *Henry VI*, in *Titus Andronicus* (it is to be feared that Shakespeare wrote it), in *Richard III*, in *Richard II*, and in the character of Shylock. In the light of these things, we may set down at their justly insignificant value the charges of "lack of humour" and propensity to rant.

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 and educated at the Grammar School of his native town, Stratford-on-Avon. He escaped the universities. Probably, the waning fortunes and diminished status of his family rankled in his mind; his later dealings in Stratford after his fortune was made, his litigation and purchases of property and of a coat-of-arms, indicate a resolution to enforce his rights and to clear a stigma from his name. After a youth spirited enough to involve him in a poaching affray and an early marriage, he turned to London, possibly just before the year of the Armada, and patched old plays; he soon awoke the lightly sleeping jealousies of the Bohemian playwrights, especially of Robert Greene. But he won his standing in London, in a quarrelsome age and set, by his genius, his engaging temper, and his fertility; he wrote on the average two plays a year for nearly twenty years, besides narrative poems and sonnets at the beginning of his career. For all this Ben Jonson is an unimpeachable witness. So far as we know, his life was uneventful, though the sonnets may reflect some desperate passion; we have no clue to the causes of the changed temper which we detect in some of his plays between 1601 and 1605. The cause may have been the fates of Essex, Southampton, and Pembroke, or it may have been some compelling importunity within his own mind. After 1608, it is as though he nad passed through this tempestuous ocean strewn with noble wreckage into a serene sun-bathed haven. He returned to Stratford about 1611 and died there on 23d April, 1616.

The Plays

A rough chronological division of the plays may be made as follows:

I. *Period of Apprenticeship.* 1590–6.

History	Comedy	Tragedy
Henry VI, parts i, ii, and iii	Love's Labour's Lost	Titus Andronicus
King John	The Comedy of Errors	Romeo and Juliet
	The Two Gentlemen of Verona	
Richard II	The Merchant of Venice	
Richard III	A Midsummer Night's Dream	

II. *Middle History and Comedy.* 1596–1601.

	The Taming of the Shrew	
	The Merry Wives of Windsor	
Henry IV, parts i and ii	Much Ado about Nothing	
Henry V	As You Like It	
	Twelfth Night	

III. 1601–8. i. *Plays of Disillusion.*

	All's Well that Ends Well (? revision of Love's Labour's Won)	Troilus and Cressida
		Measure for Measure
		Timon of Athens (in part)

ii. *Tragedy.*

History	Comedy	Tragedy
		Julius Cæsar
		Hamlet
		Othello
		King Lear
		Macbeth
		Antony and Cleopatra
		Coriolanus

IV. *Period of Romances.* 1608–12.

Henry VIII (in part)	Pericles (in part)
	Cymbeline
	The Winter's Tale
	The Tempest

We may consider Shakespeare's work under the headings of comedy, history, and tragedy, this being the division adopted in the first folio of 1623.

Comedy is integral and organic in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies as well as a separate species.

Comedy

With this warning, we may outline the varying forms of his comic writing broadly in three sections. In the first, he works through absurdity and creates farce; in the second, he works through grace and youth and creates romance; in the third, through thought and offers "criticism of life."

The farce may be that of situation as in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in which we are pledged to laugh though the central situations will not bear thinking on; or of mistaken

identity as in *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which depend on ingenuity of construction. It may be absurdities and oddities of character that he presents; these make up a lengthy and heterogeneous procession; figures of ungainly animal vigour, busy with intoxication, lying, thieving, jesting, and singing like Falstaff and Sir Toby, the consummate spokesman for the creed of cakes and ale; or Bottom, who, by sheer reiteration of himself, has become a person of importance. Next follow the cloudy-witted, like the artisans of Athens, and Dogberry and Verges, whose brains are fuddled as soon as they are called upon to act; next, the echoes and parrots, anæmic and subnormal, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Slender, and Shallow, born to be spoiled like the Egyptians; next, those with a large endowment of high spirits and mother-wit, Maria, Gobbo, and Autolycus; and here, too, we may put the disconcerted boasters and self-deceivers Parolles, Bardolph, and Pistol. A curious sympathy is extended to them all singly, whether stupid or alert, which Shakespeare could never feel for the collective mob.

His romantic comedy goes on under brilliant skies, in palaces and bowers, or in forests or by the seashore, not in Eastcheap taverns or by Gadshill. In the world of feudal observances, the primitive impulses of men must be masked. Rank, culture, leisure, convention, courtesy, disguisings, and, above all, the dominance of the radiantly triumphant creations Portia, Beatrice, Rosalind, and Viola; all these things together weave a web of artificiality in which men and women are for ever becoming entangled in comically false positions. Malvolio, who is hopelessly

inflexible and intolerant, suffers most, attempting to enter two worlds, of romance and comedy, which he does not understand. He is an older figure, but, in general, youth is on the prow and Shakespeare cultivates the belief that youth cannot make irreparable mistakes. Critics like Malvolio and the moody libertine Jaques are outfaced by the impulsive optimists, whose laughter is clear, musical, and free. The intrusions of a not very deeply laid villainy in *Much Ado* and *As You Like It* only cloud for a moment the sunshine of love and gaiety. In the last plays, often called specifically "romances," the menace of tragedy is not so easily shaken off; they turn chiefly on the theme of sundered families; age has its place and its serener outlook is the result of digested experience, rather than, as in the middle comedies, of heedless fortunate impulse.

Lastly, we may find comedy allied with thought; along this line, Shakespeare developed the fool, from the feudal jester and juggler, with words to the observant commentator with a dramatic purpose to serve; Touchstone and his tragic counterpart the fool in *King Lear* are instances. Both reason logically and have the instinct for facts, though they deliver themselves in motley; and they exemplify a generous fidelity contrasted with monstrous impiety. Much the same office is filled by the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, and the porter in *Macbeth*, auxiliary figures who intensify emotional crises in tragedy. There is wider import in the *macabre* expression of the disillusions of Hamlet, the only humourist among the tragic characters; thought takes a gayer hue in Falstaff, greatest of all comic creations. He is a

rake, spendthrift, glutton, liar, and coward for pure fun; but these things are not the essence of him, for he is of gentlemanly rank and is a master mind. He is a rebel against strait-laced authority and the unthinking man's standards; he will not admit for himself any moral standards; he ignores uncomfortable facts and evades their consequences by a wit as nimble and ubiquitous as his body is corpulent and stationary. With colossal impudence, he betakes himself to an imaginary world (though it is not devoid of logic) in which such conceptions as honour and truth appear the veriest delusions. Just when he seems to have fortified himself against facts and laws and to have absolved himself from all punishment, a twinge of the great toe finds him out and his world breaks down; its foundations were insecure, for wit cannot defy the gout, and, moreover, the callous Henry V, who was counted upon as a buttress against justice, was no true Falstaffian. It appears from this comedy that truth will out and deride the perverters of it; but never was sound moralising so engagingly embroidered.

History

The chronicle-plays on some of the kings from John to Henry VIII show a large historical grasp of this section of the feudal period and a gift of imagining the background of battlefield, council-chamber, embarkation, the pomp and retinue of rank as well as the taverns and haunts of the common soldier. The plays are, in the main, as historically accurate as their source, which is Holinshed's *Chronicles*, though there are dramatic perversions such as making Hotspur of the same age as Prince Hal. *Henry VI*, *Richard* III, and

Richard II are indebted in various ways to Marlowe. The earlier plays on the later period, the wars of the Roses, are more uniformly tragic, while the later ones, *Henry IV*, parts i and ii, and *Henry V*, are lightened by comedy, the witty insolence of Falstaff and his satellites. This was Shakespeare's school of training in portraiture, for characters and events interest him more than constitutions and creeds; *King John* does not mention Magna Carta, *Richard II* ignores the Peasant Revolt and *Henry VIII* the Reformation. Yet creed, as an element of character, is not neglected, as may be seen in the prayers of Henry V. These regal people are all brought face to face with harassing circumstance, "malice domestic, foreign levy"; not many of them emerge triumphantly. We are never allowed to forget the toilsomeness of kingly duties; the tinge of Shakespearean melancholy colours what both Richard II and Henry V have to say about ceremony. The variety and actuality of character is astonishing; fighting types, statesmen, churchmen, courtiers, archers, men-at-arms, traitors, parasites, dreamers, men with deep-grained national traits, all speak with the accent of life. Women are naturally less prominent than in the comedies, yet there are the distinctive figures of Richard II's Queen, the Lady Anne, Lady Percy, and Mistress Quickly. Moreover, these plays are the poet's utterance on the test question of patriotism. He is a little singular here, for he adds but few notes to the chorus in praise of Elizabeth; he drew his inspiration from his profound affection for the soil and heroes of England when he wrote the speeches of Faulconbridge, Talbot,

Richard II, John of Gaunt, and Henry V. He is for the Tudor settlement, and is a firm believer in the security afforded to the state by rank, though the democratic affability of Henry V was one of the traits which attracted him; the thought of the mob roused his bitterest animosity. Finally, we should note the gift of royal eloquence with which Shakespeare endows all the company of kings.

Tragedy

Shakespeare had already written tragedy before 1601 in the history plays and in *Romeo and Juliet.* But his later conception of tragedy was not like his romantic idyll, suffused with the warmth and passion and mirth of an Italian summer-night, turned to fatality. These lovers are "star-crossed"; fate casts a mortal shadow upon their perfect lyrical passion. The tragedies from *Julius Cæsar*, 1601, to *Coriolanus*, 1608, apart from their wider speculative range (perhaps due to Montaigne), present characters at war not so much with fate as with themselves. They are flawed by some frailty or consumed by some overmastering passion, and, by a malign conjunction, upon this weakness the whole weight of adverse circumstance bears too hard for faults to be retrieved, as they might in comedy. It is not the tragedy of weakness, but of weakness betraying strength; character, action, and suffering are in a necessary concatenation. We cannot, however, isolate the tragic character; there are nerves and fibres and arteries connecting him with the surrounding world. The poison gathers in these outer places, in Hamlet's uncle-stepfather, in Goneril and Regan, in Iago, in (on one interpretation of them at least) the witches in *Macbeth*, in the demagogues of

Coriolanus. The toxin works its way disastrously to the heart of these heroic figures and convulses the whole system, noble and ignoble alike; as in *Hamlet*, where the King and Queen, Polonius, Laertes and Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are all destroyed before the system is purged—the rotten thing in the state of Denmark cleansed. The plays compel us to take a wider perspective, else the ransom that evil extorts is too great a price. The dignity of the protagonists is sustained by that of the setting; empires, kingdoms, armies are at stake as well as immortal souls. The interplay of statecraft, warfare, and these passions that "o'erleap" themselves multiplies the imaginative interest, though it is never allowed to force the tragic character out of focus. Again, there are types of womanhood—Lady Macbeth and Volumnia, who, in splendour and power, rival even Macbeth and Coriolanus; whilst Cleopatra—one of the summits of Shakespeare's creative genius—altogether overshadows Antony. As a foil to these we have the fated yielding gracefulness of Ophelia and the impulsive self-effacing surrender of Desdemona. It is to be noted how the diction of the comedies and histories, clear in meaning and music and yet finely adorned, becomes tormented and often violent in the tragedies, suggesting troublous, overwrought thinking and emotion, which words cannot adequately convey; there are parallel variations in the blank verse which can only be hinted at here, but are fascinating literary studies.

The significant thing about the sources of Shakespeare is what he made of them; here, as everywhere, he had the art of distilling the finer essence from

every herb. From the thin stock of Italian novels and translations he drew the entrancing perfume of romance; from Holinshed, the strong savour of patriotism; from Plutarch's *Lives*, the sharp flavour of stoic morals.

It is needless to deny that there are blemishes, spots on the sun of Shakespeare, though there are foolish worshippers who seek to deny it; his greatness is firmly enough established by a fourfold test. First, by his creation of character; no other writer has peopled the earth with so large and diverse a company, who haunt the memory and appeal to the affections. Secondly, by the loftiness and delicacy of his morality, stoic, in the main, but inspired by sympathy, widely tolerant of frailty and exuberance, never of calculated evil, calling in very little of transcendental support or "metaphysical aid" at any great crisis. Thirdly, by his dramatic power in situation and emotion, whether comedy or tragedy. Fourthly, by his poetic gift, his command of rhythm, of imagery and the sense of the inner charm of words. Many dithyrambs have been written on Shakespeare; these four things are set down simply; the student can for himself try them, vary them, expand them with increasing knowledge of the text.

Ben Jonson

For a hundred years, Ben Jonson, 1573–1637, challenged Shakespeare in public favour; in almost all respects, save intellectual vigour, they were opposites. Jonson's learning was prodigious, as may be seen in the pedantic accuracy of his noble Roman tragedies, *Sejanus*, 1603, and *Catiline*, 1611, and in the erudite notes to his masques. His temperament was harsh, dogmatic,

and assertive, as revealed in his conversations with Drummond, and in his stage war (in *The Poetaster* and other plays) with Dekker and Marston; yet he was capable of sincere admirations. Again, though there are evidences of romanticism in him, he suppressed them and pronounced himself for rigidly classical formulæ in comedy. He introduced definitely to the Elizabethan stage the comedy of manners; realistic social types, at first, as in *Every Man in his Humour*, 1598 (not unlike *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), but tending rapidly to become the comedy of "humours" or of single idiosyncrasies as of Morose in *The Silent Woman*, 1609. In Jonson, these "humours" are neither artificial (as they become in Shadwell, for instance) nor merely photographic, for he penetrates deep into the natures of his creations, as Face, the brilliant scoundrel of *The Alchemist*, 1610; there is still more psychological insight in *Volpone*, 1605, which also illustrates Jonson's didactic and moral view of his art; comedy, in this play, barely survives in the poisonous atmosphere of loathsome vice. In all these plays, his intellect shapes and fits its material with a fine structural sense. His untiring curiosity is evident in his knowledge of the rogues' dialects of London, and of such lying and blackmailing industries as are pictured in *The Staple of News*, and in the showman's pandemonium, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1614, in which appears another colossal Elizabethan conception, Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land-Busy, to stand beside Sir Epicure Mammon and Volpone. There is a vein of fanciful imaginativeness and lyric beauty in Jonson. His pastoral play, *The Sad Shepherd*, is comparable with Fletcher's *Faithful Shep-*

herdess in music, grace, and pathos; and the verses in *Underwoods* and *The Forest*, 1616, putting aside some unpleasant epigrams, form one of the richest hoards of song and witty compliment the age provides. His writing, however censorious, is strong, vivid, the fruit of mental labour and drastic self-criticism; of all the Elizabethans, he held the most exalted opinion of poesy, and fought and hated for its maintenance. He wins sympathy a little slowly, but he compels admiration.

The masque

The masque originated in English pageantry and procession, in the forms of disguisings and mummings, in which disguisers went through a significant silent performance. But the name, and some elements which Henry VIII's patronage caused to be incorporated, came from Italy; in its later developments, it was a *salade russe* of scenery, music, poetry, allegory, emblem, and dancing. The dancing, at first, was confined to people of rank and quality; Jonson provided for the professional dancers the grotesque anti-masque or antic-masque. Many poets tried their hands at the form, Shakespeare as in *The Tempest*, Chapman, Daniel, Campion, and Shirley, but the perfecter of it was Jonson; probably his best is *The Masque of Queens*, 1609. The masque became a costly affair, subject to the stage engineer Inigo Jones, whose carpentering was sometimes at enmity with poetry. Nevertheless, some of Jonson's most exquisite lines and concerted music are in these little read poems. The masque had a sunset blazing with glory in Milton's *Comus*, 1634.

The remaining Elizabethan drama must be enumerated summarily. Chapman's best comedy is *All*

Fools, 1605, and he wrote sensational tragedies such as *Bussy d'Ambois*, 1607, in which there are, nevertheless, many flights of fine reflective poetry. A group of writers deal with domestic subjects and London life; among them is Dekker, best known by Lamb's sentence, "He has poetry enough for anything." He reveals a deep vein of humanity, skill in the portrayal of women, and poetic fantasy, for instance, in *Old Fortunatus*, 1600, and *The Honest Whore*, 1604. Other members of the group are Munday, Chettle, Drayton, Rowley, Day, and Heywood, whose enormous output includes one masterpiece, *A Woman killed with kindness*, 1603. Middleton has bustling and realistic comedies of a low world, *A Trick to catch the old one*, 1608, *The Roaring Girl*, 1611; and one great scene in his tragedy *The Changeling;* here, as elsewhere, Rowley appears to have braced Middleton to his nobler efforts; *The Witch* has affinities with *Macbeth*. In prose and in verse Middleton has rapidity and ease. Tourneur has poetry in the midst of the gloomy horrors of *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Atheist's Tragedy*, 1611. Marston hovers between the bombastic and the caustic in his tragic *Antonio and Mellida*, 1602. He had a share in the excellent citizen comedy *Eastward Ho!* Beaumont and Fletcher (the latter collaborated with Shakespeare in *Henry VIII* and in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) are generally thought to have come nearest to Shakespeare. The fifty-two plays published under their names in 1647 are many men's work, but chiefly Fletcher's. They wrote together the tragi-comedy *Philaster*, 1610, and *The Maid's Tragedy*, 1611, where may be seen creeping in not

Other Elizabethan drama

only excessively romantic event (common enough in Shakespeare), but unreality of motive and unaccountable transitions of character. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, 1609, is a lively bourgeois farce and parody. Beaumont is generally credited with balance and judgment, Fletcher with invention, grace, gaiety, deft construction, a liberal infusion of licence, and a talent for lyrical verse only inferior to that of Shakespeare. The blank verse of Fletcher plays fast and loose with even the bare minimum of restriction retained by Shakespeare in his later plays: Fletcher has redundant syllables in all parts of the line; henceforth, until Milton, blank verse degenerates. Webster, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1614, paints a consummate picture of nobility in woman; no accumulation of horror or suffering can break her heroic spirit; in this play and in *The White Devil* he employs sinister Italian themes and characters with immense tragic effect. Webster has imaginative genius, pictorial power, and Shakespearean penetration into passionate emotion, but he exercised his gifts too uniformly among images of mortality and scenes of intolerable cruelty.

Massinger was one of the busiest of collaborators; he is remembered best by *The Roman Actor*, 1626, skilfully involving political motive, and *The Virgin Martyr*, tragedies, and by his comedies, *The City Madam* and *A New Way to pay old Debts*, 1626(?). He has some command of tragic terror and writes fluent verse attaining often to dignity and rhetoric; he constructs with remarkable craftsmanship and economy and these gifts win for him high rank. John Ford never deviates from the events and emo-

tions which drive on to the tragic outcome; this incisive, relentless force leads up to the scene of Calantha's dancing in *The Broken Heart*, 1629, one of the most powerful, though not the most natural, out of Shakespeare. The charge against Ford—that he signalises the decay of Elizabethan drama—rests less on the unsoundness of his subjects than on his apparent sympathy with moral anarchy. Shirley's tragedies, such as *The Traitor*, 1631, and *The Cardinal*, 1641, his comedies, such as *Hyde Park*, 1632, and *The Lady of Pleasure*, 1635, prove him to be last but not least of the great dramatists. His famous song, "The glories of our blood and state," is in the short drama (not a masque) *Ajax and Ulysses*. Other dramatists are Randolph, Field, and Brome, whose *Merry Beggars* was the last play staged before the closing of the theatres from 1642 to 1660, for Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes*, 1656, is more important to opera than drama. Shirley and Sir William Davenant seem to bridge the interval of silence; but, though Davenant wrote both before and after the Restoration, the alterations he made in theatrical conditions, the introduction of scenery and of women actors, were soon to be paralleled by a change in the type of drama; the heroic play of the Restoration has but faint spiritual affinities with the tragedy of the Jacobeans.

We speak of this vast bulk of drama as romantic; the word has to cover a wide area of meaning. Putting Jonson aside, we may take it to mean that playwrights were careless of the unities, preferring a wider canvas of region and time. They eschewed restraint, for they worked from the model of the complexity of actual life, ignoring the classical method, selection

and emphasis of single aspects; they disdained restraint in diction, and, in the later period, in subject—for the age could stomach the strongest stimulants—using inadmissible themes and muffling the shock of moral condemnation. The traditional English admixture of comedy and tragedy is likewise romantic; the same title is used for the many plays in which humanity is transported to some remote or imaginative scene where a lyrical or rhetorical splendour pervades its speech; finally, stress is laid upon passion and feeling. The crowning gift of the English renascence drama, taken as a whole, is its almost infallible power of finding fit and moving utterance for every shade of emotion.

5. Poetry from 1625 to the Restoration

Lyric

The history of poetry from Donne to Milton presents three main episodes: (i) lyric, which has an almost continuous record from Wyatt to Dryden; (ii) the development of the new heroic couplet and the rise of satire; (iii) endeavours after the heroic poem. i. Lyric writers were under the influence of Ben Jonson or Donne or both. Jonson banished the Petrarchan tradition, but rarely sings with the "wood-notes wild" of Shakespeare, and is never tempted to extravagance of imagery; a pupil of Horace, Catullus, Martial, he imported the ideals of elegance, proportion, and restraint. For the most part, cavalier lyrists are of the "tribe of Ben." Carew often achieves musical perfection and has a graver note in his *Elegy on Donne;* Suckling owes his mockery of gallant usages

to the lighter side of Donne's contempt for women; his impetuous gaiety is his own. Herrick's range and accomplishment are the widest, including, in *Hesperides*, 1648, Catullan and Anacreontic song, Horatian idyll, the stuff of folk-lore and country festival, gallant compliment and love tribute to many seductive deities, flowers and their suggestions of transient beauty, verse epistles, and some weightier lines on the evil fortunes of his king and country. There is more sincerity of feeling in these than in the distinctly pagan piety of his religious poems, *Noble Numbers*. His pure clear feeling and his mastery of metre are the warp and woof of an exquisite fabric, and he has, besides, a flute-like melody and rhythmic subtlety and delicacy which almost conceal the infinite pains he took with his art. Wither, in his early poems, such as "Shall I wasting in despair?" Waller, in songs like "Go, Lovely Rose," and Lovelace, with his fine chivalric note, are much less given to Donne's "metaphysical" ingenuities than Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Cowley, in Dr. Johnson's *Life* of whom is found a destructive criticism of the whole school; neither Milton nor Dryden escaped the contagion, and the religious poets were especially prone to take it. George Herbert's quiet but deeply stirred piety is expressed through images and an order of thought much influenced by Donne, as in poems like *The Pulley* and *Man*. Crashaw has a more passionate note. His *Wishes* and his translation *Music's Duel* are graceful secular poems, but the religious ecstasy and imaginative opulence of *The Flaming Heart* and *The Hymn to St. Teresa* are his real claims to remembrance.

Herrick

Vaughan the Silurist, in *Silex Scintillans*, 1650, was influenced by Herbert, but he has a deeper vein of mystical thought; he speaks of childhood, nature, light, and eternity, with subtle insight and with a rare kind of imagery, and he left some impress on Wordsworth. The newly discovered poet Traherne, also a Kelt, has high moments, as in *The Choice* and *The Estate*, but his prose *Centuries of Meditation* show richer emotion and a greater command over style. Habington's *Castara*, 1634, contains amorous and religious poems of the metaphysical school; Quarles's *Emblems* are only half literature and that half homespun. We may complete this long chapter in the history of the lyric by the mention of Rochester, Sedley, Dorset, Mrs. Aphra Behn, and Dryden himself in his plays, each of whom wrote more than one unforgettable song of the cavalier type, often, especially in the case of Rochester, with a note of real passion.

The new couplet

ii. The heroic couplet, even in the isolated form, is used by Elizabethans such as Spenser, Drayton, and Sandys; but it becomes more pointed and antithetical, more epigrammatic and rhetorical, and less imaginative in the poems of Edmund Waller about 1623; he introduces the balanced epithet, places the cæsura with more regularity, has stronger riming words, and confines the sense to the distich. For these things he was too generously credited by Dryden with "the reform of our numbers." These qualities become more manifest in Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, 1642, and in the *Davideis* of Cowley, thought a genius in his day, whose voluminous output also included so-called

Pindaric odes, imitated later by Dryden, and, with marked differences, by Gray and by many nineteenth century poets. Marvell, the friend and assistant of Milton, was, like Cowley, a scholar; his satires, *Instructions to a Painter* and others, are inferior to his *Horatian Ode*, 1650, and to *The Bermudas*, and to his amorous and pastoral verse, such as *The Garden;* these are in octosyllabics of a "witty delicacy" in diction and rhythm, and have fine observation and feeling for the intense hidden life about him. The drift towards satire, for which the heroic couplet was the foreordained instrument, is again illustrated in the violent tirades of Oldham, *Satires upon the Jesuits*, 1679. This carries us well past the Restoration and almost to the Revolution.

Epic

iii. The heroic poem or epic was the goal of seventeenth century effort, a perennial ideal of the renascence. It was discussed by all critics, and attempted by Cowley in his *Davideis*, 1656, in couplets, by Davenant in his *Gondibert*, 1651, in quatrains, and, in a more romantic fashion, by Chamberlayne in *Pharonnida*, 1659, in couplets. It would have been essayed by Dryden on the subject of King Arthur, had his pension been paid more regularly. It was finally written in blank verse by Milton in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, and the mould thereafter was broken.

Milton

Milton's early upbringing and the bent of his disposition made him first of all a puritan in spirit, though certainly not in the letter; a cultured puritan and a lover of music. His classical education at St. Paul's and at Christ's College, Cambridge, 1625–32, developed the instinct

for form, beauty, and craftsmanship which was never to be reconciled with his religious tenets; the Hebraic and the Hellenic in him were both too native and too formidable to yield to any compromise, though his mastery of style may disguise their deep-laid enmity. His models were generally classic, his materials generally scriptural. His residence at Horton in Buckinghamshire touched in him some chords of interest in natural scenes, but not enough to seduce him from books. His journey to France and Italy, 1638–9, brought him into relations with scholarship in these countries, and laid the foundations of a continental reputation, which his controversies with Salmasius and Morus and his letters of state, written as Cromwell's Latin secretary, were afterwards to extend. These years of political service, 1649–58, undertaken through his keen sense of obligation to the Commonwealth, were almost destitute of poetry. At the Restoration, his life being surprisingly spared, he resumed the poetical ambitions rudely broken in upon by civil strife; his epic and dramatic poetry appeared between 1660 and 1671.

Early poems

The Ode on the Nativity, 1629, contains some trace of metaphysical extravagance, but more remarkable are the Miltonic blending of pagan and scriptural themes, the stately movement, and the imaginative insight, rising to its height in the flight of the deities of antiquity from their haunts and oracles. *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, *c.* 1632, are richly decorative presentations of two imagined moods, companion pictures of studious retreat and festival mirth, wherein is evident the

poet's ear, exact and musical, for all the rhythmic possibilities of pace and sound inherent in the octosyllabic couplet. *Arcades* is a fragmentary, but worthy, predecessor of the masque *Comus*, 1634; here, the poet uses a larger canvas; its theme is nearer to morals and the strict conduct of life; temptation and chastity are emblematically figured in Comus, who eloquently presents the snare of vice as an enrichment of life; and in the Lady, who counters this with the high and arduous doctrine of restraint. Platonic, rather than puritanic, idealism underlies the debate. The art, conscious, varied, and perfect, of the blank verse and the "Doric delicacy" of the songs are the highest reach of non-dramatic poetry to this date. Dr. Johnson's criticism that, as a tale, it moves slowly is much more justifiable than his strictures on *Lycidas*, 1637, which establishes the model of pastoral elegy drawn from the Sicilians, and serves as exemplar to Shelley's *Adonais* and Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*. *Lycidas* should be compared with Milton's earlier *Epitaphium Damonis*. The death of Edward King is not much more than a pretext, though the idea of loss allows of the invocation of nature, English and Sicilian, the procession of mythical and scriptural mourners, and the Christian consolation; "eloquent distress" is the happy description of the poem by Keats. The passionate note of Milton rings clear for the first time in two digressions; one, on the true nature of fame, condemning poetical triviality; and one, a wrathful puritanic denunciation of hireling clergy. *Lycidas* is in iambic lines of different length and rime arrangement, with some few unrimed lines,

slight discords skilfully resolved into the general harmony. Milton's sonnets are the occasional outbursts of smouldering poetic fire kindled during twenty years of politics; some embody sentiments stirred by historical events, as those on the *Piedmontese* and on the *Assault;* some are domestic and personal, as those on his *Wife* and on his *Blindness;* some perpetuate the mood of *L'Allegro*—it never died completely out—as that *To Cyriack Skinner.* Save that he makes free with the *volta* or turn, he adheres to the stricter Italian scheme of the sonnet. He is also a writer of Latin verse, the most accomplished, save perhaps Landor, of all English poets who attempted it.

Paradise Lost

In 1658 he resumed his intended life-work, which "posterity should not willingly let die." The Elizabethan lyric notes are but faintly blown in his great orchestral symphony. It tells, like the miracle-cycles, the story of the fall of man, with the prophecy of his redemption. But the fall of man is preceded by the fall of Lucifer and it is here that the dramatic force of the story is developed; it is not profitable to discuss who is the hero, but it is certain that the attitude of irreconcilable rebellion against tyranny which Satan takes up in Books I and II is in sympathy with Milton's temperament and that the official characterisation of Satan, as the impious rebel and source of all evil, is crossed and blurred by the element of Promethean heroism in his nature. We may get the justest view of Satan if we think of him as a defeated general, reassembling and inspiring his forces, by the splendour and irony of his oratory,

and by Machiavellian suggestions, to a renewal of a forlorn conflict. The latent qualities of pride, envy, and ambition are developed in succeeding books, where his angelic form loses all its original brightness, and he is degraded. The whole story is slowly unfolded in the epic manner with large inset episodes, its scenes placed in the empyrean or in the circumambient chaos, in paradise or in hell; only once or twice does it falter in dignity of conception, never in the solemn grandeur of its speech. Milton sought "to justify the ways of God to man." Inasmuch as he did this by making use of a temporary theological system, his poem is for an age; but it is for all time in its intellectual comprehensiveness, its vast imaginative scale, its moral sublimity, its descriptive power, whether shown in clear-cut outlines against vague backgrounds, or in pictures of armies moving "in perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood," or in classic similes. Whether in its triumphs of oratory, its arguments on divine things, or its occasional idyllic tenderness, the sense of dedication is over all. And still there remain its style, the massive verse paragraphs Milton designed with "the sense variously drawn out," and its diction of a rich and permanent texture. Words came to him with a long-hoarded wealth of association and with subtle musical values like organ notes with their overtones; and out of these things he wove the true poetic fabric of cadence, imagery, and memories.

Paradise is regained, not as a result of the sacrificial offering of the Messiah, but by his resistance to Satan—a meaner, more calculating Satan—at the beginning of the ministry in the desert. The poem

wants dramatic interest, for we cannot form an anticipation of the fall of Christ. But, as in *Comus*, the offerings of the tempter are set out with no attenuation of their charms; the pictures of the banquet, of the kingdoms and powers of this world, and of Athens, mother of arts, have no superiors in Milton. Here, the prevalent austerity is relieved by imaginative colour; the close, like all Milton's endings, is perfect. His original intention of employing dramatic form for *Paradise Lost* was abandoned, to be revived in *Samson Agonistes*, a subject considered very early, as the famous Trinity manuscript shows. Again, he treats scriptural matter in classic form, choosing the Sophoclean drama. *Samson* is the outcry of a "gray spirit yearning in desire" for the restoration of the fallen ideals of puritanism; the likeness of the cases of Samson and Milton is evident; the poet contemns the licence and triviality of the court, and expresses his steadfast conviction of the purpose of the Deity, in good time, to crush his foes. The verse, here, is harsher, perhaps more powerful, but with fewer elements of geniality, and the rhythmic norm is, in the choruses hard to detect.

***Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, 1671**

At heart, Milton was a puritan; to the puritanic spirit he clung more tenaciously than he did even to the humanities. But he was a puritan of a different stamp from Bunyan; the untutored emotion—"enthusiasm" the next century would have called it—of Bunyan has no place in the more disciplined utterance of Milton. He accepted the large outlines of Calvinistic doctrine, though he held the Arian

heresy that the Messiah was later born in heaven and not co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit. Satan's right to rebel hangs upon this doctrine, for the exaltation of the Messiah to the right hand of the Almighty—the act of a political tyrant—is Satan's grievance, the *fons et origo*, according to *Paradise Lost*, of all human history. This definitely mapped out scheme of the relations between man and God left little room for mystery, for the feeling of religious awe in face of the unknown; there is no mystery of that kind in *Paradise Lost*.

On the other hand, it is an immense conception, whether we accept it or not, and whether we think it too doctrinaire for epic poetry or not; sublime in its outline and imposing the loftiest standards of action. This moral austerity, and the sense of the duty of holiness, obedience, and service, were the elements of Milton's character which appealed to Wordsworth, when he sought in some of his sonnets to intensify the spiritual factors in national life at a later crisis.

6. Prose from 1625 to 1660

Prose of controversy

The prose of the middle of the seventeenth century reflects the disintegration of national interests. Elizabeth's religious compromise and the monarchical security of the Tudors collapse; Anglican and dissenter, royalist and commonwealthsman are at wordy warfare, a struggle soon to become a strife of arms. Religious controversy centres about the question of toleration, and the outlines of the argument can be studied in

Hales, Chillingworth (*The Religion of Protestants*), Lord Falkland, Taylor (*The Liberty of Prophesying*, 1646), all tending to find the essentials of agreement in the Apostles' Creed; the discussion grows wider and more fantastic in Cudworth's *Intellectual System of the Universe*, 1678, and closes in Locke's letters *On Toleration*, 1689, establishing the validity of the appeal to reason. The hottest of the anti-prelatists was Milton; among his pamphlets on this topic is *The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelacy*, 1641, which tells us much about himself. He became an independent on perceiving that "new Presbyter is but old Priest writ large." He was deep, also, in political controversy (it cost him his eyesight), as in *Eikonoklastes*, 1649, a defence of the execution of Charles I, and in his *Second Defence of the English People*, in Latin and autobiographical; but his greatest piece of polemics is his *Areopagitica*, 1644, a speech on behalf of unlicensed printing. It failed to persuade the Presbyterians to remove the censorship, but it is an imperishable vindication of the rights of thought against tyranny and prescription. Round the central tenet of liberty Milton grouped, though by an afterthought, all his prose, on divorce, on church, and on state, except his idealised picture of Miltonic schooling, *The Tractate on Education*, 1644. More philosophic minds than Milton's set themselves to solve these urgent problems; Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, 1651, traces the history of society from its aboriginal state of internecine war through the "social contract" to its logical outcome in absolute monarchy, which is established on grounds of universal self-interest, not, as hereto-

Milton

fore, by divine right. The prose of Hobbes has a grim tenacious power which irritated into activity a widespread opposition. Harrington's *Oceana*, 1656, and Filmer's *Patriarcha*, 1680, and Algernon Sidney's *Discourses* treat of these topics, while Locke's *Civil Government*, 1690, reflects the Whig settlement of the Revolution. His *Essay concerning the Human Understanding*, 1690, lays a broad foundation for the metaphysical theory of the eighteenth century. Another great writer fashioned by these troublous times was Clarendon, whose *History of the Great Rebellion*, begun in 1641, published 1702–4, proves him a maker of history and a great statesman in a time of intrigue and cabals. It is not impartial or critical history, for the dice are heavily weighted against the parliamentarians, nor does it pierce to the currents and movements of which events are merely the surface ripples; but it has high literary power, its record is unfolded with sustained dignity of speech; in description of warfare and political narrative it is masterly, and it is unmatched in its gallery of historical portraits.

Other recorders are May in his *History of the Long Parliament*, 1647, and Fuller in his series beginning with *Good Thoughts in Bad Times* and closing with *The Worthies of England*, 1662. Nearer still to the type of memoir are the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, 1660–9, the latter a historical document of importance and a piquant example of self-revelation. Of letter-writers must be mentioned Howell for his witty and entertaining *Familiar Letters, Domestic and Foreign*, 1655, and Dorothy Osborne, for the letters to her fiancé, Sir William Temple.

There are other minds who appear detached

from current strife; a group of divines and a group akin to the essayists. The eloquence of the pulpit begins in Elizabeth's reign with Lancelot Andrewes and with Donne, splendid in strange harmonies of prose, expressing spiritual intimacy and wonder; it continues parallel with the great French preachers Bourdaloue and Bossuet, through Fuller the incessant humorist and Jeremy Taylor, South of cogent wit, and Barrow, a man of science and pulpiteer. Taylor is among the three or four great Anglican orators; his sermons are deeply versed in the classics and the Fathers, full of human sympathy, multi-divisional in method, rich in imaginative decoration and simile, and complete in knowledge of oratorical art. On the Puritan side, there is much less learning and much less elaboration, with a correspondingly intense concentration on the affairs of the individual soul. Richard Baxter wrote many volumes—"a cartload," the infamous Jeffreys said—besides *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, 1650. But the greatest of Puritan preachers was John Bunyan, who, better than Byron, deserves the title "the Pilgrim of Eternity." The central experience of Bunyan's life is recorded in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, 1666. During his imprisonment he discovered his power of giving concrete expression to inner experience. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678–84, took shape as a dream-allegory; its materials were drawn from his own spiritual history; from the Scriptures and commentaries upon them; from chap-books, emblem-books, and popular romances; from the actual persecutions of dissenters; and

Non-controversial prose
i. The Divines

Bunyan

from the roadside life of his day. His power lies, first, in his intimate portrayal of a widespread order of religious experience; next, in narrative skill and in a sense of character so vivid that we forget he is writing an allegory; thirdly, in the vital zest and energy of his style, familiar, racy, shrewd, a perfect dialect for the unlearned. The abstractions do not live so concretely in *The Holy War*, 1682, as in this "similitude of a dream"; *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, 1680, is often praised, but the realistic narrative of tradesmen's thievery is too thickly strewn with Biblical phrase and discussion. The fine spirit of Sir Thomas Browne, almost our first egoist, is compounded of curiosity, mysticism, charity, and strange learning. His purpose in *Religio Medici*, 1643, is to define his faith; in reality he draws the cloak of Christianity over an engaging collection of heresies. "There is all Africa and her prodigies in us," he says; he compels his religion to be reconciled with these marvels; the result is the revelation of a kingdom of the mind whose new beauty and wonder stir him to an ecstasy of thought and language. His *Pseudodoxia* or *Vulgar Errors*, 1646, is a storehouse of older credulous knowledge veined with scepticism, and of learned divagation. *The Garden of Cyrus* ransacks nature in pursuit of the ubiquitous quincunx, while *Christian Morals* and *A Letter to a Friend* give some sense of his high stoical ethics. His noblest gifts are exercised in the fifth chapter of his *Hydriotaphia* or *Urn Burial*, 1658, a gorgeous prose elegy on fame, antiquity, and death, viewing man as he stands in the perspctive of the present, the past, and eternity, and

ii. Essayists. Browne

moved thereby to the various emotions of melancholy, compassion, and exaltation. The prose in which these things are expressed has vast imaginative range, profound reflection, a quite individual and fascinating humour, whimsical and arresting thought, where what the age called "wit" is blended with sumptuous phrasing and poetic rhythm; and, over all, there is a solemn sublimity in the strangely harmonious periods. There is a great school of prose eloquence concerning mortality, which includes Ralegh's *History*, the essay on *Death* wrongly attributed to Bacon, Drummond's *Cypress Grove*, and Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*.

Cowley's *Essays*, 1667, on such subjects as *Liberty*, *Solitude*, *The Garden*, have the intimacy of personal revelation, picturing, in the main, a man disillusioned but not discontented, seeking retirement and its grave pleasures. He perceived the right function of the essay form, and hit happily upon the ideal essay style. He may well illustrate the transition from the older to the newer school of prose. Izaak Walton says in his preface to *The Compleat Angler*, 1653, "I have made myself a recreation of a recreation" and mixed thereto "some innocent mirth." The book has for its literary ancestry, pastoral and piscatorial eclogues, "old-fashioned poetry but choicely good"; and it records with a like felicitous simplicity the complacent joys and callousness, the varied fishing-lore and some of the rather irrelevant classical learning of Piscator. The opening is a triumph of prose descriptive of sport and nature; and the final benediction "upon all that are lovers of virtue; and dare trust in His providence; and be quiet; and go a Angling," harmonises with Walton's undisturbed remoteness from the

restless age. His *Lives* of five notable divines are masterpieces of biography, redolent of the personalities of his subjects, as old gardens are of perfumes.

As to the matter of all this prose we note the widespread polemical activity, the louder bayings of puritanism, the gentler accents of toleration, a general anxiety of thought, becoming, at times, a deep-toned melancholy, and a new tendency towards realism. As to style, there is a welter of forms; some few writers, Hobbes, Walton, and Bunyan among them, cultivate a direct, incisive manner; but men of learning are in the main over-Latinised in diction, or over-decorative for the plain man's affairs; Milton, Taylor, and Browne are instances. Some again are parenthetical and structurally helpless; Milton and Clarendon both suffer in this way, though both are masters of the grand style. Some writers are excessively oratorical and periodic; this charge lies against Milton—as great a sinner as he is a master—and Taylor. Milton, Taylor, Browne, and Clarendon are monuments, not models; the making of modern prose style was the business of the next generation.

BOOK IV

THE LITERATURE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES, 1660–1800

I. Prose from Dryden to Swift, 1660–1720

The renascence as it comes to us from Italy blazes into a splendid consummation in Milton. Henceforth, so far as writing is touched by literary influences, these come to us from the renascence as coloured by its passage through France. The exiled Court returned from its long vacation with the habits, manners, ideas, and literary interests of France. But these affect mainly the literature of the Court. There is a competing influence, that of the citizen class, the humanised descendants of the triumphant but intolerant commonwealthsmen; this and other developments, such as the liberation of the press, the party cleavage into Whig and Tory, the patronage of literature by the politicians, are reflected in the writings of Dryden, Congreve, Addison, Steele, Pope, Swift, and Defoe.

Prose undergoes a disciplinary process; it was exercised in the pulpit, by Tillotson, to whose "clear, plain, and short sentences" Dryden overstated his debt; in the essay, by the learned ama-

teur Sir William Temple; in political debate, by Halifax, whose defensive *Character of a Trimmer* and *Advice to a Dissenter*, 1687, give him a rank only below Dryden; in pamphleteering; in journalism, by L'Estrange; and by writers on science. Bishop Sprat, secretary of the Royal Society (in which Dryden, Pepys, and Charles II were enrolled), told in a famous sentence how they exacted from their members "a close, naked, natural way of speaking," the reverse of the imaginative splendour of the school of Browne. The final outcome was modern prose, fit for "the average purpose"; its diction and metaphors no longer at the mercy of the Latinising rhetorician; its short harmonious sentences not modelled on the wheeling periods of Cicero, but having their emphasis, pause, and rhythm determined by the sentence of conversation. The conversational ideal also prescribed for modern prose its tone of equality with the reader, and its vivid happy pictorial manner in the quick suggestive way of the good talker; wit, elegance, clearness, point, animation, these are the qualities of Congreve's comedies and Dryden's criticism.

The making of modern prose

John Dryden, 1631–1700, was the literary dictator of his day, eminent in prose, verse, and drama. His main concern in prose was with criticism, which judges confusedly at first, having for its accepted models French interpretations of Horace and Aristotle and finding no consonance between these and the work of the Elizabethan giants before the flood. Dryden with his genuine love of the *best in letters* came nearest to reconciling the two

Dryden

interests; all his prefaces and essays turn on these matters; *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, 1668, is rather academic, though splendid in praise; the *Preface* to the *Fables*, 1700, is more independent, for here he sees Chaucer clear through many mists. Keen perception, generosity, freshness, and zest distinguish him throughout. Dennis and Rymer, rather pedantic critics, and the Frenchman Saint-Évremond, long resident in England, can only be named.

Swift

Jonathan Swift, 1667–1745, dean of St Patrick's, Dublin, the supreme genius of unpoetic prose, produced, in 1704, *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub*, treatises dealing in trenchant satirical fashion with literary squabbles concerning ancients and moderns, and with the dissensions of Christian sects. He had a period of almost regal power as a Tory politician, 1710–13, won by such brilliant political pamphlets as *The Conduct of the Allies*, 1711; the intimate side of this part of his life is recorded in the delightful *Journal to Stella* with its "little language" and its traces of genial humour, only paralleled in his chaffing of the astrologer Partridge. Afterwards, he suffered the bitterness of a proud and masterful mind possessing immense nervous energy yet condemned to engage in the pettiest occupations; physically, he was a sufferer; his mysterious love-affairs fell into confusion; furious emotions fermented within him, generating a morbid misanthropy, which coloured too darkly his passion for reason and justice. Irony is his distinguishing mark, as may be seen in *The Argument against Abolishing Christianity*, 1708, and in the hideously tragical mirth of *A Modest Proposal*,

1729, which suggested that the superfluous children of the Irish poor should be disposed of by being served up as food. Irony is accompanied by invective and some malice in his *Drapier's Letters*, 1724, against the monopoly of Wood's halfpence in Ireland. All his resources are brought into play in *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726. Its narrative skill, whimsical invention, and meticulous detail have made it, by a strange destiny, a child's classic; the concurrent irony becomes more searching and more repulsive in successive degradations of humanity, till, in the fourth book, man is stripped of every shred of honour, decency, morality, and reasonableness, and becomes a cowering and nauseous Yahoo. The method of his irony is either to conduct some assumption of unreason with all gravity to its disconcerting conclusions, or to set truth blazing in the very lines of the pictures which the complacent and the hypocritical draw of themselves. Swift's is the model of all plain unadorned styles; in lucidity, directness, force, and in the perfect conveyance of thought into the fewest and most effective words he has no equal. No genius at once so universal in range and so penetrating in criticism of society appeared again till Burke.

With Swift should be named his friend Dr. John Arbuthnot, a man of fine character, whose gifts were like the more genial half of Swift's. He was the inspiring spirit of the Scriblerus Club in which Pope, Gay, and Congreve were also concerned, and was the author of the Tory *History of John Bull*, 1712.

Addison and Steele were the first to find articulate and polite utterance for the prevailing part of the

new nation, the puritan middle classes. The extravagance, insolence and licence of the Restoration era had provoked a reaction in the direction of morality and order; and the increase in wealth and the very influential institution of the coffee-house brought something of amenity into the outlook of the middle classes. Addison and Steele made their fellow-citizens—sound in heart and understanding but without established traditions—conscious of themselves; it was an office of national importance, and it is difficult to imagine a more propitious conjunction of the hour and the men. With extraordinary tact, they varied preaching with ridicule, pictorial example with appeals to sentiment, all with an engaging air of enjoyment. They gave a decisive turn to the national mind, becoming its accepted censors in morals, manners, dress, literary taste, and conversation. In nothing was their influence more necessary or more powerful than in restoring the status and dignity of women by awakening their self-respect and enlarging their horizons; in this, Steele's chivalry is more attractive than Addison's condescension. In fact, we may say generally that, while Addison has a more urbane culture, a more retired observation, a quicker eye for eccentricity, a defter irony, Steele, who is less aloof, has a greater warmth of feeling and more generous impulses. It was Steele who initiated the whole enterprise by means of *The Tatler* (appearing three days a week, 1709–11), a miscellaneous sheet containing news, stories, domestic sketches, admonition, poetry, and learning. Addison was drawn into the undertaking, and, when *The Spectator* began on the cessation of *The Tatler*, he

The Spectator

wrote more than half of its 555 issues between March, 1711, and December, 1712. *The Spectator* appeared daily and, discarding news, confined itself to a single essay. Mr. Spectator is Addison's creation, the Spectator Club is Steele's; both have an honourable part in the characterisation of the perennially charming feudal aristocrat Sir Roger de Coverly. Besides these papers, there were lay sermons, tales, allegories, correspondence, accounts of functions, of visits to the theatre, and criticism such as Addison's papers on ballads and on *Paradise Lost*. The two banish political rancour from their journal (though Steele's pronounced whiggism found an outlet in some later ventures), and avoided personal scandal; they endeavoured, in Addison's words, to "enliven morality with wit and temper wit with morality"; so that, while the Restoration poured ridicule upon virtue, these writers poured ridicule upon vice, and they found the whole nation with them. Addison achieved a perfect style for these essays, easy, effortless, colloquial, but correct and never without dignity; Steele is more negligent in choice of word and in syntax, but in pathetic and domestic scenes he strikes a chord beyond Addison's range.

Defoe

Daniel Defoe or Foe, 1660(?)–1731, belonged to the obscurer side of the journalism which sprang up when the censorship was withdrawn in 1695. Numerous ephemeral sheets preceded him, but his *Review*, written in Newgate prison, afforded some hints for the first numbers of *The Tatler*. He was a busy and effective pamphleteer for twenty years before turning to fiction. He had an amazingly ready pen, a prosaic but racy and

copious style, a journalist's eye for those details which take the public taste, an extraordinary knowledge of what everybody was doing and what they were paid for it, and an unmatched faculty for colouring fiction with the hue of truth; the gift is at its height in his *Journal of the Plague Year*, 1722. All this realistic writing and describing served him in the best stead when he wrote at the age of sixty his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, the epic of the plain devout man overcoming adverse nature. His narrative power was exhibited also in other fiction, such as *Captain Singleton*, 1720, *Moll Flanders*, 1721, and other stories generally nearer to the manner of Nashe than to the modern novel.

2. Poetry from Dryden to Pope

Dryden

The emergence of the heroic couplet as the main vehicle of poetry has been traced. Dryden is the first master of the measure in which satire, elegy, panegyric, debate, epistolary matter, criticism, and miscellaneous learning were to find expression for a century. After some early metaphysical attempts, Dryden produced his *Annus Mirabilis*, 1666, in quatrains, on the fire, plague, and war of that year. For fourteen years, his attention was given to drama in heroic couplets, and, with this practice behind him, he produced *Absalom and Achitophel*, 1681, a sketch of the political situation in which Charles II, Shaftesbury, and Monmouth were the principal figures. The poem has supreme skill in political argumentation and presents a gallery of portraits including Zimri,

Achitophel, and Shimei, masterpieces which show forth the individual and the type in one figure; their clear outlines and ingenious choice of detail make them unanswerable, because the statements are either next door to the truth, or cannot be refuted without uncomfortable disclosures. In the warfare of satires which followed, Dryden was irritated into attacking Shadwell and Settle, in the second part of *Absalom* and in *Macflecknoe*, 1682; he gives decisive proof, apparently, of their claim to all the titles of infamy; then, after an interlude on their poetical incapacity, he sends them hurtling into the realms of dulness. There is no other personal invective so explicit yet so tempered by artistic execution. His later exercises in the couplet include *Religio Laici*, 1682, a rational Anglican's case, while *The Hind and the Panther*, 1687, is his *apologia* on the occasion of his conversion to the Roman Church; *The Fables*, 1700, are adaptations in the same measure chiefly from Boccaccio and Chaucer. The most notable of many translations was his *Vergil;* and he wrote, besides, lyric verse in his plays, and pindarics such as *Alexander's Feast* and *An Ode to Mistress Anne Killigrew*. He left the couplet varied in accent and pause, a vehicle for prosaic thought and diction, effectively rimed, with the sense contained, for the most part, within the limits of the riming lines. There are other couplet writers between Dryden and Pope, such as Granville and the Earl of Dorset, Garth (*The Dispensary*, 1699), and Blackmore.

Hudibras

Of more importance is Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, 1663–8, a parody in octosyllabic couplets of *Don Quixote*, victimising the Presbyterians in the figure of the knight Hudibras, and the

Independents in that of his squire Ralpho. It is hard and bitter in sentiment, and weak in construction, but amazingly clever in idea, compression, imagery, and rime; the mind becomes restive under its incessant explosions of wit. In some other writings, Butler shares with Swift a hatred of the new science. This octosyllabic form began early to challenge the sway of the decasyllabic; most of Swift's verse (*On the Death of Dr. Swift, Cadenus and Vanessa*), Prior's *Alma*, Gay's *Fables*, Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, Parnell's *Night-Piece*, Matthew Green's *The Spleen*, show for what various moods it could be used.

Pope

Alexander Pope, 1688–1744, is the typical poet of the generation after Dryden; a town-dweller, suspicious of enthusiasm, a satirist, a critic, devoid of lyric gift, accepting authority from France, a skilled and conscientious artist in form, much beholden to a shibboleth called "nature," compounded of scraps from Boileau, Horace, and Aristotle with a strong infusion of eighteenth century common sense—a thing as remote as possible from "nature" as Wordsworth thought of it. Pope's poetry, practically all in the heroic couplet, included criticism, satire, translation, and ethics; in his *Essay on Criticism*, 1711, he had attained perfect ease and polish. His satires are of three classes: (i) the brilliant mock-heroic *Rape of the Lock*, 1712–14, a gay satire of the cavalier world; (ii) *The Dunciad*, 1728, of which the part attacking dulness is excellent and necessary, but the personal abuse of Grub Street hacks and of Theobald (who exposed the textual failings in Pope's edition of Shakespeare, 1725) does Pope himself a disservice; (iii) his most mature and most accomplished

Epistles (including the masterly one to Arbuthnot, 1735) and the *Imitations of Horace*, 1733–9. These are a mingled yarn of the best and worst in Pope; there is sane judgment, fine irony, concern for letters, loyal friendship to Swift, Arbuthnot, Gay, and the rest of the Scriblerus circle; but accompanying these things are personalities such as the malicious and plausible distortion of Addison and the venomous portrait of Hervey. His translations of the *Iliad*, 1715–20, and *Odyssey* (with coadjutors) are masterly, though far from literal, re-interpretations, in pointed antithetical couplets, after the taste of the time; but they undoubtedly retain something of the Homeric lightness and energy. *An Essay on Man*, 1733, elaborates a philosophy based on the inconsequent optimism of the brilliant but superficial Bolingbroke. It is worth notice that, in his early pastorals and in his emotional poems *Eloisa to Abelard* and his *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*, he gives evidence of a vein of romantic feeling afterwards unworked. Pope is a master of the secondary rhetorical kinds of poetry, or, to put the matter in other words, the inner urgency which drove him to composition does not appear to have been delight in beauty or imaginative vision. He is a craftsman of infinite patience, aiming at polished perfection of speech. To achieve this he employs the arts of elegance, lucidity, antithesis, and "wit," which by Pope's time had come to mean the incisive and memorable expression of familiar ideas. His tendency to compress his meaning into single lines or, at most, into the distich, together with his extraordinary power of crystallising thought into words, produces the effect

of a shower of metrical epigrams; it reveals, too, the lack of such wide-sweeping imaginative conception as would require the space of the paragraph for its statement. Within the line the break comes generally after the second or third foot; at first, the effect is apt to be monotonous; after a time we realise with what delicate and subtle skill the variations of stress are proportioned to their purpose, whether of oracular statement, pathos, satire, or eulogy. These effects are what Pope offers in compensation for his abandonment of the bolder freedoms of Dryden, whose couplet had a constant tendency to *enjambement*, that is to overflow, to triple riming lines, and to alexandrines. Criticism, since Wordsworth, has been prone to belittle Pope; and it cannot be denied that there were uncomfortable traits in his character. Nevertheless, the last word on him ought rather to be an acknowledgment of his conscientious and unceasing devotion to his craft of letters.

3. Prose of the Later Eighteenth Century 1720 to 1800

Prose of doctrine

The prose of theology centred about the deistic or rationalist controversy; the opponents of revealed religion were writers such as Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, author of *Characteristics*, 1711, Tindal, Conyers Middleton, and Toland, while on the orthodox side were Butler, author of *The Analogy*, 1736, close-knit, and exhaustive in its argument, and William Law, famous for his mystical and evangelical *Serious Call*, 1728. In

philosophy, Locke's empiricism was varied by Berkeley's idealist doctrine that matter only exists for mind, and by Hume's development of it, that the mind itself is but a succession of ideas. Hume wrote with great literary charm, but Berkeley, as in his *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, 1713, developed a style of grace, lucidity, and power hardly to be paralleled in any other philosophical writing. With these should be associated Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, which opens in verse, a vigorous, penetrating, and misanthropical survey of society, to which the mystic, William Law, made an effective reply.

The Essay

Steele's *Guardian*, one of many ventures which flourished for a little time when *The Spectator* came to an end, was without a really notable successor until Johnson in the *Rambler*, 1750, and in his later *Idler* and *Rasselas*, 1759 (which is not much more than a bound volume of *Ramblers*), proved that a man might have many gifts of heart and brain, learning, shrewdness, sympathy, humour, religion, wisdom, and yet not be able to dissipate melancholy or to achieve the lightness of the perfect essay style. Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses* brought art criticism within the range of the essay; Ruskin and Pater are the chief of many later disciples. Goldsmith, in *The Citizen of the World*, adopts the pretence of being a Chinaman surveying naïvely the follies and oddities of Englishmen. But the Addisonian tradition of the essay was worked out, and when the essay was revived by Lamb and Hazlitt, it was fundamentally changed in manner and matter. Meanwhile must be noted the foundation of the modern newspaper press (for instance, *The Times* and *The Morning*

Post), the relations of which to literature at large are not yet fully determined.

Memoirs and Letters

Of memoirs and letters this is our golden age, almost challenging the supremacy of France. Swift's *Journal to Stella*, 1710–13, portrays intimately the foremost figures in society, literature, and politics, at the end of Anne's reign. Swift moves in these circles on a footing of perfect equality. Pope's polished letters were put forth and advertised in characteristic subterranean fashion; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's show her a bluestocking possessed of a keen, sardonic wit; Gray's are the *locus classicus* for the change of attitude towards what had hitherto been thought forbidding and monstrous in natural scenes; Chesterfield's are brilliant, courtly, and wise, intending "to fashion a gentleman in noble discipline" after French and English models; the other aspect of them is commented on by Wesley in his *Journal* thus: "He was a man of much wit, middling sense, and some learning; but as absolutely void of virtue, as any Jew, Turk, or Heathen, that ever lived." Walpole's vivid epistolary style records the gossip, personal tastes, antipathies, reflections of a busy leisure and wide-ranging mind, with an air of intimacy, a quick sense of the comic, and some measure of malice, a mixture which makes his letters an incessant source of amusement. But none of these letter-writers has a sense of style so inborn, so delicate as Cowper's; his material is simply that which passes before our own observation, but he charms attention by subtle grace and simplicity of description; the elements are mixed in infallible proportions.

Madame D'Arblay's *Journal*, beginning 1786, gives a vivid and personal account of her uncomfortable office at the court of Queen Charlotte. The *Letters of Junius*, 1769–72, which contain virulent invective against the Duke of Bedford and others of the King's party, have the fortune to embody a mystery of authorship; opinion leans, though hesitatingly, towards Sir Philip Francis as the writer.

Biography

In biography, the age has such masterpieces as Gibbon's *Autobiography*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, 1791, and Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 1779–81. There was, no doubt, a large vein of folly in Boswell, but he had uncommon skill in providing opportunities for the play of Johnson's personality, an artist's sense for the salient aspects of an incident, a rare measure of hero-worship, a retentive memory, and an engaging narrative style, with the result that of no other man have we a presentation so intimate, so detailed, and so unforgettable as to manner, habits, garb, and speech. It is from Boswell's *Life* more than from his own writings that we derive our picture of Johnson, marked by disease, awkward in gait, emphatic in assertion, a lover of talk and of clubs, as well as our impression of his courage, independence, British intellect, with its largeness of grasp in some things and insular speculative narrowness in others, his readiness to argue all causes, his melancholy, his piety, his benevolence, his immovable prejudices against the Whig dogs and the Scots. Except for the three months' tour in the Hebrides, Boswell cannot have met Johnson on an average more than ten days a year in the twenty years of their acquaintance. In

Dr. Johnson

view of all this, it is clear that Macaulay's first sketch of Boswell (Macaulay made some amends in a later essay) as the fortunate fool of literature is an injustice. Johnson's other writings are numerous, including the great *Dictionary*, 1755, the edition of Shakespeare, 1765, with its splendid preface, and his *Journey to the Western Isles*, 1775; but the crown of his writing is the *Lives of the Poets*, 1779–81, combining biography and criticism. Literary anecdote keeps its savour in these pages, but the *Lives* also afford a body of criticism in which the canons of the pseudo-classical school reveal both their strength and their weakness. His understanding and sagacity make such lives as those of Dryden and Pope almost final pronouncements, but his lack of sensitiveness for imaginative expression and for a freer music than Pope could charm from the heroic couplet, to say nothing of his church and state prejudices, render the account of Gray nugatory and that of Milton only partially valid. His earlier involved sentence structure and polysyllabic diction are tempered by this time to a finer strength and a mature ease. The *Letter to Lord Chesterfield* gave a death-blow to the system of patronage under which writers had successively profited and starved since the Restoration; henceforth, the author was to appeal direct to the public.

History

History in the modern sense, like the essay, letter-writing, and the novel, is a creation of the age of prose and reason. Hume's *History of England*, 1762, is a different thing from the garrulous though generally accurate contemporary records of Burnet's *History of my own Times*, 1723. Hume's writing is clear and spirited, he has narrative

skill, sense of character, and philosophic reflection; Smollett's continuation is simply vigorous hack-work. Robertson's *Histories of Scotland* and of *Charles V* are in the rotund Latinised style which took a new lease of life in Dr. Johnson's time. He examined with some care such material as the age provided, and is accurate in the main. No such qualification need be put upon

Gibbon

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 1776–88, of Gibbon, one of the masterpieces of historical writing. First, he brought together by tireless and minute research an unimaginable mass of detail which his historical sagacity interpreted with rare judgment; next, he chose his vantage ground so as to present in panoramic succession the major events of thirteen hundred years—the spread of Christianity, the barbarian irruptions, the rise of Mohammedanism, the record of the Persian Empire, Arabic civilisation, the Crusades, closing his survey with the brilliant relation of the fall of Constantinople. How masterly is his control of his multifarious material may be seen in the fact that, for the years 476–1453 he changes the scale of the work and yet maintains unfalteringly his sense of proportion. Gibbon's attitude, to which his *Autobiography* gives consummate expression, is in the main that of impartial detachment, except towards religion and zeal; these things (he was much influenced by Voltaire) provoked his ironic scepticism, as in his famous account of the spread of Christianity. His style has a long resounding march and energy in sentence, paragraph, and chapter; its system of balanced rhetorical clauses is well suited to express the pros and cons of his well-considered statements. The monumental quality of

his achievement may be judged from the fact that modern scholars, though they revise details, make no proposals to supersede his work as a whole.

Burke

Edmund Burke is the greatest of all political orators by virtue of his minute knowledge of events, piercing insight, imaginative grasp, and magnificent rhetorical endowment. In his earlier speeches on English affairs, such as *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, 1770, and on colonial politics, such as his *American Speeches*, 1774–5, he investigates problems as they are illuminated by past experience, is generous towards progressive hopes, condemns meticulous legality, and aims at "reason, justice, and humanity" by means of a practical and high-minded expediency. Yet all his eloquence failed to avert the War of Independence. The French Revolution set him face to face with a more profound social upheaval and forced him back to a conservative upholding of inherited institutions, for which he has been accused of inconsistency. In *The French Revolution*, 1790, and *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 1795–7, he formulated his creed of the state as an organism of slow beneficent growth enshrining the "permanent reason" of the race as against popular illusions—which he abhorred as much as he did abstract politics—while, at the same time, embodying the conception of moral duty and forbidding revolution. He lifted political discussion out of the sphere of mere argument by his analogy between the state and the world; and he called in imagination, sentiment, the whole nature of man in fact, to assist the reason in the exercise of judgment; in this respect, he may be counted something of a romantic. His oratory shares in

the revival of the long swelling sentence, though, within it, he manages admirably his antithetical clauses and enlightening illustration; he has an unequalled gift for the accumulative method and for interfusing poetic phrase and imagery of oriental richness so that it seems one with his thought. All subsequent political speculation is deeply in debt to Burke.

4. The Novel

The backward record of the novel might stretch to the Greek romances; but its more significant features were not compounded till the eighteenth century. Long and detailed realistic narrative is seen in Bunyan, Defoe, and Swift; character sketching in Addison, and, on the domestic side, in Steele; the association of naturally related characters in real circumstances, plot, and situation are found in Fielding; while sentiment, erotic emotion, and the sense of tragedy are added by Richardson.

Richardson

Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, 1740, and *Sir Charles Grandison* (portraying an insufferable masculine ideal) are inferior to his *Clarissa Harlowe*, 1748. When fairly entered upon, this novel enchains the reader; it has a Ford-like tenacity in respect of its tragic theme, the undoing of Clarissa by Lovelace, fecklessly seconded by her rigid and unimaginative family. Its insistence on feeling to the exclusion of almost all else, and its stuffy conception of virtue may seem unhealthy; its interminable length, its epistolary form, its diffuse and endlessly analytic style make

a great dead weight to lift; but the book rises to the rank of a classic; it was accepted as such in France and Germany, where its influence was enormous. Henry Fielding, after dabbling in the drama, turned novelist to ridicule *Pamela* in *Joseph Andrews*, 1742; this revealed to him his vocation and in *Tom Jones*, 1749, he proved himself the possessor of the strongest and most comprehensive understanding among the English novelists. The tale is plotted on epic scale, the conventions of which are wittily utilised in the initial chapters of each book. Its range of incident is wide, the events set in country houses, inns, and by the roadside; the London part of the tale is the least attractive. The book is full of living men and women, of broad humorous comedy of situation and character, and of a widely tolerant spirit exacting a standard remorseless in its castigation of hypocrisy, treachery, and calculating propriety. Fielding is not invaded by the hot-house sensibility, the conscious glow of feeling of Richardson and Sterne; his whole world is manlier in its acceptance of things as they come. Neither the Swift-like irony on the subject of "greatness" in *Jonathan Wild*, 1743, nor his later novel *Amelia*, 1751, attains the proportions of *Tom Jones*. *A Journey from this World to the Next* has brilliant satire in the chapters describing Elysium. Fielding writes the masculine flexible English of the scholar and the man of the world, the best of all middle styles. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, 1760–7, defies all the canons of order and development; it is an eccentric fantasy having for its ancestry Rabelais, Cervantes, Burton,

Fielding

Sterne

and Arbuthnot. No thread of story runs through the work, no possible world is reflected therein, but rare turns of humour and pathos, and, above all, character, appear; Uncle Toby, and Corporal Trim especially, are figures constantly being elaborated by subtle touches delineating gesture, speech, the absorbing pursuit of their wayward hobbies, and their generous human feeling. The style is shot with iridescent colour, full of Rabelaisian pedantry and allusive innuendo, yet answering, on occasion, to every call of emotion or description. Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, 1768, is a document showing forth the "sensibility" of the time, the high-wrought feeling perpetually threatening tears, which actually flood the page in Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, 1771.

Goldsmith

Goldsmith's charming idyll, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 1766, is feeble in structure, being but a series of incidents in a chequered family history loosely bound together; but its humanity and sympathy, its delicate touch on humour, pathos, satire, and tragedy, and its limpid musical prose ensure for it a place among the great prose writings of the eighteenth century.

Smollett

Smollett's picaresque novels, *Roderick Random*, 1748, *Peregrine Pickle*, 1751, and *Humphrey Clinker* (in letter form), 1771, often reflect his rather harsh and irritable temper, but they have extraordinary wealth of comic adventure drifting easily to blows, variety of character, including national types, doctors, and sailors—the shadier and more insolent predominating—and a coarse, racy speech, all of which were doubtless enriched in his own travels by land and sea.

We may briefly indicate several lines of development which the novel followed; first, that of romance, of such varying shades as we see in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, 1764, Beckford's *Vathek* (in English), 1786, Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolhpo*, 1794, and the novels of other terror-mongers such as "Monk" Lewis, who were parodied in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Next, novels of edification such as Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, 1794, turning on the pathology of crime; and the Rousseau-like educational story *Sandford and Merton*, and those of Hannah More and Miss Edgeworth. Thirdly, we may note the beginnings of the novel of local colour, Irish in Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, 1800, Scottish in Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, 1821, and Miss Ferrier's *Inheritance*, 1824, these last two in the wake of Sir Walter. Lastly, most important in its immediate results, the novel of manners or domestic satire; in this, Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, 1778, rich in character sketches, precedes the masterpieces of Jane Austen.

Minor novelists

Jane Austen, 1775–1817, in her *Sense and Sensibility*, 1811, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion*, 1816, adapts the comedy of manners to the novel. Her circle is small, and no doubt she was confirmed in her tendency to realism by a reaction from the novels of mystery, which she ridiculed in *Northanger Abbey*. She delineates the upper middle class family of the southern counties, its relatives, its emigrations to Bath, and, more rarely, to town, and its absorbing interest in marriages and dowries; these constitute the two inches of ivory on which, as she

Jane Austen

herself said, she worked with a fine brush. Grant this miniature circle and the absence, for the most part, of tragic and vehement matter, and she must be allowed to attain perfection in her art; not only by reason of her remarkable restraint, her sure instinct for proportion and for selection of salient detail, her unfaltering consistency in character-drawing, but, also, by her style; for, whether in the dialogue, or in the finely ironic phrasing of her comment, she never fails in aptness and a kind of fastidiously used force. She lives and moves in the company of her characters, like Dickens, but, whilst he is in a continual state of exuberant excitement about them, Jane Austen is always alert, sane, unsentimental, witty, rather like Meredith's comic spirit abroad. She imparts to the atmosphere in which we view her characters some quality of sharpness and clearness, so that they make an ineffaceable impression upon us and we know them through and through.

5. The Eighteenth Century Tradition and the Rise of Romance in Poetry

The successors of Pope

The tradition of Pope continues in writings in couplet which stretch in a thinning line down to Byron. Addison's *Campaign*, 1704, Tickell's fine *Elegy on Addison*, Parnell's *Hermit*, Young's satires, *The Universal Passion*, 1725–8, Johnson's *London*, 1738, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 1749, Churchill's lampoons, *The Rosciad*, 1761, and others, Goldsmith's *Traveller*, 1764, Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, 1789 (richly burlesqued in *The Anti-Jacobin*), Rogers's

Pleasures of Memory, 1792, Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, 1799, Crabbe's narratives, from *The Library*, 1781, to *Tales of the Hall*, 1819, Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1809; these make up a catalogue, which could easily be extended, of poems of which the themes are satire, panegyric, elegy (death and the churchyard were much in the mind of the eighteenth century), learning, and didacticism; much more rarely do we find poets treating of passion, nature, or large historic event. Some of the titles indicate what proved to be the besetting sin of this age of intellectual analysis, namely abstraction and personification. Some poets use the typical measure, the couplet, but are less didactic, as Gay in *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, 1716, and Prior, though his light and sparkling "society verses" such as *The Female Phaeton*, *To a Child of Quality*, and *Jinny the Just* are far superior. Other writers are of the didactic tradition in subject but not in form, using, for instance, blank verse, as Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, 1744, and Young's *Night Thoughts*, 1742–4; they and many others followed Milton, but, not having access to his springs of inspiration, were prone to write a diction "glossy and unfeeling" or large, circumlocutory, and ineffective; much more understanding of blank verse was shown in the Miltonic burlesque (not in the least malicious), *The Splendid Shilling* by John Philips. Other poets of the age are partly in the pseudo-classic tradition; but the fortunes of Pope's school are falling and we seek out more curiously the forerunners of the rising dynasty. They are heard even in the moment of Pope's supremacy; they besiege the classical citadel

on many sides. First, we see men turning from the town to the fields in Thomson's *Seasons*, 1726–30, accurate and sensitive descriptions of quiet aspects of nature, though, in diction, too imitative of Milton; in Parnell's *Night-Piece*, in Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, 1727, in Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, 1725, in Gray's *Elegy*, 1751, and in his *Letters*, in Collins's exquisite *Ode to Evening*, 1747, in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, 1770, in Cowper's *Task*, 1785, and in the *Songs* and *Poems* of Burns. Next, we may note the use of the Spenserian stanza in Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, 1742, and in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, 1748, in some part a real re-animation of the spirit of Spenser; Milton's early poems count for something, too, with Gray and Collins. When we remember that the earliest name in Johnson's *Lives* is that of Cowley, 1618–67, it becomes significant that Spenser was edited by Thomas Warton, 1754, Chaucer by Tyrwhitt, 1775, and Shakespeare by Pope, 1725, by Theobald, 1734, by Warburton, 1749, and by Johnson, 1765. A number of works which, earlier, would have been called contemptuously "Gothic" came to light in the second half of the century. Thomas Warton's learned *History of Poetry*, 1774–81, reopened the closed book of medieval romance; ballads were brought fully to light in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1765. Gray's *Triumphs of Owen* and *Fatal Sisters* are from the Welsh and Norse. The Highlands are the scene of the cloudy and gloomy heroics of Macpherson's pseudo-Gaelic *Ossian*, 1762. Chatterton's *Rowley Poems*, purporting to be of the fifteenth century, show an interest in the past which takes a scholarly turn in

The heralds of romance

Gray's more erudite odes, *The Bard* and the nobly conceived *Progress of Poesy*. Something must be set down also to the religious revival led by John Wesley; it does much more than produce the hymns of Cowper and the rich, vigorous, and triumphant *Song to David*, 1763, of Christopher Smart.

Of the great mass of writing thus summarily dismissed we may dwell for a moment on one or two outstanding things. It is evident that the splendid rhetoric tinged with melancholy of Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and the happy delineations of characters in the circle of Dr. Johnson's club in Goldsmith's *Retaliation*, 1774, are of an earlier date in spirit than Gray's *Elegy*, 1751. There is a magic appeal in the solitary figure of the *Elegy*, even though we cannot form any human picture of him, reflecting in a mood of resignation in the hushed twilight landscape upon the lot of the rustic poor, who are foiled of fame, yet doomed, like all their fellows, to the inevitable grave. The appeal partly lies in the finely phrased truisms, about feelings the occasions of which are common to all; partly in the implicit human cry for sympathy. The polished diction and the rhythm have a rare quality which transcends the formal balanced epithets and the excessive use of inversion, things which, in themselves, would stamp Gray's genius as of his age. He is far from being clear from the vices of his school—witness his personification and abstraction and want of the free lyrical note in the *Eton College* ode; yet, by his feeling for the wilder aspects of nature in his *Letters*, and for humbler human beings as in the *Elegy*, and by his sensitiveness to the imaginative

Gray's *Elegy*

worth of other literatures, Welsh, Norse, and the poetry of Dante, he is on the side of romance. He was the widest read man of his day, a critic of fine insight and historical sense, and he was not ignorant of science. William Collins, like Gray, wrote in the form of the elaborate academic ode; it would be an instructive exercise to trace the form of the ode, whether Pindaric, pseudo-Pindaric, or of regular, successive stanzas, through Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, down to Swinburne, who pronounced the ode the supreme form of lyric poetry. The *Ode to Evening* is the masterpiece of Collins; there is fastidious art and classic self-possession in his *Ode to Simplicity;* and, in the *Dirge in Cymbeline* and "How sleep the brave," he proved himself the most exquisite lyrist between the Elizabethans and Blake. Chatterton's fine *Ballad of Charity* ought also to be singled out both for its intrinsic quality and for its later influence on Coleridge, Keats, and the pre-Raphaelites.

Signs of transition

All this means a wider range of poetic subject; it points to a liberating of emotion and to a revival of imaginative faculties, which had been gradually but finally dulled during the puritan ascendency, the cavalier reaction, and the age of prose and reason. Again, when Pope counselled poets to follow "nature," his meaning was that they should portray man as he appears in his social environment; as this conception of the function of poetry loses sway, the embittered partisan attitude of the urban poets yields to more frank and unsuspicious feeling and to enthusiasm; the rigid rationalistic temper gives way before the

invasions of mystical and religious thought in Blake and Cowper; abuse, debate, preaching, and generalities are replaced by solitary introspection and reverie, or by communings with nature, or with things of sensuous beauty; individualism, tentative in Cowper, pronounced in Blake and Burns, takes the place of an attempt to write to an artificial pattern in the school of Pope; feelings which give colour to unexciting but intimate events are expressed poetically in Cowper, and the child-mind finds its first understanding spokesman in Blake. These changes are accompanied by a less frequent use of the long-established couplet, the flat blank verse line, or the octosyllabic couplet, which was to have, however, a new lease of life in the *Christabel* form established by Coleridge; and this was only one example of a fresh metrical inventiveness which set in with the revival of lyric, and of which the latest master was Swinburne. As a result of all this we get, at the end of the century, writers of the classical tradition side by side with romantic innovators.

Crabbe

George Crabbe, 1754–1832, in his verse form and in his satirical temper, is old-fashioned; the realism of his description of country folk in a way anticipates Wordsworth, but is without Wordsworth's sympathy; he began describing the villages he knew in a fit of revulsion from Goldsmith's sentimentalism. His pictures of nature and the sea are most intimately observed, and though he is apt to see the harsher aspects, he paints what he sees vividly and arrestingly. *The Borough*, 1810, *Tales in Verse*, 1812, and *Tales of the Hall*, 1819, make up a series of narratives, including character sketches and tragic biographies, for the most part of people of higher rank

than those in *The Village*, 1783. His tales are not altogether sombre; some are touched with humorous observation, and there are unexpected flashes of romantic feeling; most of the tales have unmistakable force and grip and strong satirical power.

Cowper

William Cowper, 1731–1800, is another figure of the transition. His *Table Talk*, *Expostulation*, and the like are in the tradition of Pope; but he came to protest against its artifice; he sought to translate Homer more simply than Pope and he deserted the couplet for blank verse. Above all, he revolted against the town. "Chartered boroughs," he says, "are public plagues." The *Winter Evening* in *The Task* argues that man has an innate love of natural objects, which not all the seductions and vices of cities can obliterate. *The Task*, 1785, which heralds the return of poetic style, has a curious diversity of theme; the most persistent interest in it is the recounting of all the simple delights and observations of country life, the coming of spring, the sound of distant bells, the light occupations of the gardener, the gambollings of pets and animals, much in the manner of Vergil's *Georgics*. With this, there is a large admixture of exhortation, of evangelical doctrine, of challenges to deists, and of the opinions of a scholarly recluse possessing a religious temper. He has many sallies of humour, boisterous, as in *John Gilpin*, Prior-like in other verses, quite individual, as in *The Colubriad*. His music has a larger volume in the unfinished *Yardley Oak*, 1791; and there is intense feeling in the pathetic poems to *Mary Unwin* and the lines *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture;* the terror of his own mental experience gives the power

of profound gloom to *The Castaway*. The lines *On the Loss of the Royal George* may take a place among patriotic lyrics such as Thomson's *Rule Britannia*, Garrick's *Hearts of Oak*, and the war lyrics of Campbell, in which rhythmic effects are generally much surer than the diction and imagery.

Blake

William Blake, 1757–1827, mystic, poet, and engraver, is an isolated, not to say miraculous, phenomenon in his day. He is not inspired in any way by his age; he remained almost unknown during his life and he did not found any school. His *Prophetic Books* are not yet fully elucidated, though it is clear enough that they anticipate the liberal doctrines of the next generation; as in Shelley, reason and custom are accused of fettering imagination and goodness, priestcraft and kingcraft are condemned, and "great things are done when men and mountains meet." The last books, *Jerusalem* and *Milton*, are overcharged with the vast spectral images and symbols which haunted him habitually. His genius is more unmistakably at play in his shorter poems in *Poetical Sketches*, as early as 1783, and *Songs of Innocence*, 1789. In some of these he recaptures perfectly the lyric note of the Elizabethans; in others, the very spirit of childhood speaks out its impulses and delights in its own voice of simple magic; in this identification of himself with the child-mind, Blake has no peer. *Songs of Experience*, 1794, have some sinister discords breaking in upon the melody of innocence. Something of the range of Blake's lyrical genius—its strength and its sensitiveness—may be realised from a comparison of "the fervent beauty and vigour of

music" of *The Tiger*, with "the fierce floral life and radiant riot of childish power and pleasure" in *Songs of Innocence*.

Burns

We must think of Robert Burns, 1759–96, as coming late in a line of great tradition rather than as a conscious herald of romantic revolt; he was, in fact, an admirer of English eighteenth century literature. He continues the tradition of Scots poetry, which in a diminished way had been upheld by Allan Ramsay (*Poems*, 1721) and Fergusson (*Poems*, 1773) and by many unknown local poets of the type of Davie Sillar, Lapraik, and Simson, recipients of some of the most human verses of Burns. It is true that some elements in the tradition and in Burns coincided with the movement towards romance in England—the love of the soil and animals; the feeling for natural scenes; the revival of the lyric note; the democratic doctrine, which hit well with his pugnacious independence; the assertion of the worth of humble folk; the piety of the hearth-side; the unashamed utterance of strong instinctive passions; the return to past heroism and history, sometimes with a Jacobite tinge; the sensitiveness to the imaginative and supernatural in folk-lore. On the other hand, his unsparing and irreverent satire of religious hypocrisy, as in *Holy Willie's Prayer*, and of all hereditary pretensions; his love of strong rustic liquors and gaieties, as in *The Jolly Beggars*, and the mirthful narratives, such as *The Twa Dogs* and *Tam O'Shanter*, which swing along with reckless speed, yet have full and exact detail, and incisive vividness of expression—these things are like enough to some aspects of Dunbar, but they are not much

in consonance with the aims of Wordsworth or of Keats. Burns's *Songs*, perhaps even more than his *Poems*, are rooted fast in a rich native soil; the *Songs* are, for the most part, words invented or elaborated from some suggestive or musical existing phrase, to fit the melodies of old Scots folk-songs. In these, perhaps his highest genius is shown, in their exquisite sensitiveness, their absolute fidelity to experience (compare them, for instance, with the generalised emotions of his verses in English), the beauty and simplicity and power of his diction and rhythm, especially when he utters passionate feelings of tragic or pathetic intensity.

6. The Drama from 1660

The story of the drama from the re-opening of the theatres at the Restoration to modern days is a tale of mediocrity relieved by occasional flashes of comic splendour. The first episode is that of the heroic play, a grotesque form of tragedy, drawn, as Dryden says in his preface to the most famous of them, *The Conquest of Granada*, 1670, "far above the ordinary proportion of the stage"; heroic romance and French tragedy share the responsibility for the matter and form of these plays, which were generally in heroic couplets. Next came the series of Shakespearean imitations and revisions; there was much incompetent botching, but Dryden's *All for Love*, 1677, a remaking of *Antony and Cleopatra*, is worthy of its theme. Nathaniel Lee's *Rival Queens*, 1677, is fitfully poetical; and Otway in *Venice Preserved*, 1682, evolves a most moving tragic conclusion out of

a conflict between loyalty and passion, in spite of the comparative bareness of his diction. Garrick took some liberties with the text of Shakespeare, but at least he restored dignity to his profession. Shelley's *Cenci* is the only other tragedy in the Elizabethan tradition that our drama can boast. A succession of rhetorical tragedies may be traced in the eighteenth century, Addison's *Cato*, 1713, Young's *Revenge*, 1721, Thomson's *Sophonisba*, 1730, Dr. Johnson's *Irene*, 1749; but a brilliant series of burlesques, *The Rehearsal*, 1671, Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, 1730, and Sheridan's *Critic*, 1779, hounded the type to death. Citizen tragedy made a momentary appearance in Lillo's *George Barnwell*, 1731. Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, 1728, a travesty of fashionable Italian opera, took the town by storm, but is not in itself any great thing. Comedy has much more to show. The realistic comedies of Shadwell, a fruitful creator of Jonsonian humours, picture the Alsatian aspects of London life; Dryden's comedies, such as *Sir Martin Mar-All* and *The Spanish Friar*, 1681, are mostly *tours de force;* he joined in the foray which pillaged Molière for characters and situations and cheapened them on their way across the Channel. A finer product is the comedy of manners, such as Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, 1676, the comedy of Wycherley (*The Plain Dealer*, 1677) and of the brilliant trio, Congreve (*The Way of the World*, 1700), Vanbrugh (*The Relapse*, 1697), and Farquhar (*The Beaux' Stratagem*, 1707). It is the wittiest comedy of an actual society that we have; it portrays a world of heartless infidelity, of reckless adventure in pursuit of lawless pleasure, of the droll

Restoration comedy

contretemps which arise out of plentiful intrigue; but the infinite grace of speech of the culprits redeems them for literature. Into this orgy of licence Jeremy Collier, a non-juring divine, hurled his *View of the Immorality of the Stage*, 1698; but its immediate result was a decline in art; comedy was brought back to a clean way of writing only to become the tearful, sentimental thing it is in Steele's *Conscious Lovers*, 1722, and in the figure of Faulkland in Sheridan's *The Rivals*, 1775. In the reaction from this school, the last writers of comedy till our own day, the Irishmen Goldsmith and Sheridan, produced their masterpieces. Goldsmith in *The Good-Natured Man* and in *She Stoops to Conquer*, 1773, has a real sense of character, especially of the pleasantly grotesque (for which he might have taken himself as, in some measure, a model), comic invention, natural sentiment, and amusing dialogue. Sheridan chooses his material for plot and character in *The School for Scandal*, 1777, from earlier plays, from Vanbrugh and Molière; it is a richer, more urbane world than Goldsmith's, with entangling social conventions, concerns with legacies, marriages of convenience, idle coquetry, and scandal-mongering; the usual world of high artificial comedy. But the dialogue, though also in that tradition, is his own, the quintessence of verbal wit. The earlier *Rivals* is, for the most part, farce enriched by the figures of Bob Acres and Mrs. Malaprop. *The Critic*, with its play inset, is unsurpassed in the brilliance of its literary parody. Though his comedy is still artificial, and though most of his characters are old types, yet the effectiveness of his situations and surprises, his pointed critic-

Goldsmith and Sheridan

isms of manners, and, above all, his wit of idea and speech, compel laughter, and his style makes him enduringly readable. From this time forward there is a long intermission; no plays which are at once literature and suited for the stage are to be found until we come to two Irishmen of our own day, Wilde and Synge.

BOOK V

THE REVIVAL OF ROMANCE, 1798–1832

I. New Conditions and Interests in Literature

We have seen that many new forces are stirring by the end of the century; the twin processes of evolution and revolution are at work. But the conscious revolution, the sense that old fetters must be snapped and a new way of life entered upon, waits for the declaration of Wordsworth and Coleridge in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798. For what they accomplished and what they adumbrated in the nineteenth century, many names have been proposed—"the return to nature," "the romantic revival," "the renascence of wonder," "the awakening of imaginative sensibility," "the convalescence of the feeling for beauty." But no single name can define the diverse gifts exemplified, let us say, in *Michael*, *Kubla Khan*, *Marmion*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, though it is easy to see that all of them differ from *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. The enquiry into causes and evidences might take us far afield; we may concentrate attention upon two or three points.

i. Economic and political changes lie behind. The most powerful influence is that of Rousseau (himself indebted to Thomson's *Seasons*) working through the French Revolution. Rousseau's comprehensive return to nature involved, in the main, three things, all of which were to germinate in English literature; first, a return to the country, next, the unchecked expression of the emotions, thirdly the levelling of all social distinctions; these things all contribute to the ideal of the primitive unsophisticated man wandering in the forests, the natural habitat of virtuous unrestrained simplicity. The fundamental doctrine of liberty was worked out in prison reform, or slave liberation, in the benevolent idealism of Shelley or the individualism of Byron; in Germany, in defiance of oppression, it gave birth to a nation. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey all proclaimed an ardent youthful sympathy with the French Revolution; all of them recoiled from its implications and methods, and younger generations, represented by Shelley and Browning, looked on them askance, as "lost leaders" in the great cause of freedom.

Rousseau

ii. The same insurgent spirit is at work, also, in criticism. To this chapter belong Wordsworth's theorising contentions (afterwards tempered by Coleridge) as to the material best suited for poetic treatment, as to an appropriate diction, and as to the function of metre. The same rebellion against rule, reason, and uniformity underlies changes in the type of the critical magazine; the earlier *Edinburgh*, 1802, *Quarterly*, 1809, and *Blackwood*, 1817, adhered substantially to the older

Changes in critical method

canons. They were powerful enough to delay the acceptance of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, though Jeffrey of *The Edinburgh* in the end softened some of his strictures upon Wordsworth, and spoke generously of Keats. But, meanwhile, the truer critical method of imaginative insight and sympathy had been born in the writings of Lamb, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and De Quincey.

Subjects of the new poetry

iii. We have already noted the evolution of a deep-felt sympathy between man and nature, and a recognition of beauty in the simple emotions, in eighteenth century poetry; these were to be the texts of all Wordsworth's prophesyings. But, in other ways also, the new poetic genius is irresistible. Wherever at any earlier time poets had seen the vision of beauty or caught the strains of a true music the romantic genius claimed the inheritance. The art and mythology of Greece, the historic scenes of Italy and the Mediterranean shores, the exotic customs of the East, the chivalry, superstition, and faith of the Middle Ages, the life of the Border with its insatiable feuds and its singular heroism—the new poets essayed all these themes; sometimes attempting to gild refined gold, as in Keats's *Endymion*, but more often loading every rift with richer ore as in *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and in *The Eve of St. Agnes*. Subjects were found, moreover, beyond the horizon of these remote and historic matters. A crude and unimpressive treatment of the supernatural had pervaded the novels of the school of Walpole; Keats and his contemporaries strike chords that ordinarily lie silent far within the threshold of rational con-

sciousness, yielding echoes only when unknown terrors, longings, dreams, and ecstasies are stirred, such as find utterance, for instance, in *Tintern Abbey*, *The Ancient Mariner*, and *Suspiria;* furthermore, they may be seen learning to divine between what is merely neurotic and disordered and the finer issues of mystery and terror, in the successive versions of *The Ancient Mariner* and in Keats's omissions from the *Ode on Melancholy*.

We may remark, also, a tendency towards picture and tale in place of analysis and disquisition (though there is didactic and reforming poetry of supreme quality in Wordsworth and Shelley). In Coleridge and Keats, colour and imagery are so vibrant and profuse that they appear like enchantments seen through the magic casements of the *Ode to the Nightingale*. Some of the writers of this school cause that thrill of the perfectly chosen word which gratifies at once the expectation of ear, imagination, and understanding more often than has any one since Shakespeare. The disciples of Keats, the pre-Raphaelites, cultivated a studied exactness of imagery, and the method degenerates, no doubt, into the modern vice of word-painting. Indeed, the pathology of romanticism is a revelation of the manner in which good customs corrupt the world.

There are resemblances between the earlier nineteenth century and the earlier creative period, the Elizabethan. Here, again, we find widened horizons, the flood-tide of poetic energy, and the worship of beauty; but, while the earlier group dealt mainly with the world of action and affairs, the later, with exceptions, as in Byron and Scott, has a less ad-

venturous, more introspective cast. Except Scott, there are few creators of characters, and no very notable contribution to comedy; and the later age has no drama.

Romantic and classic

A moment may be given here to a distinction which is constantly confronting us in the nineteenth century; that between romantic and classic. It is not necessarily a distinction of subject, for some of the triumphs of romance are, in Shelley, Keats, and Swinburne, on classic themes; nor is it a case of the presence or absence of imagination, though this might serve to differentiate broadly the pseudo-classic eighteenth century. There is imagination in both the true romantic and the true classic; but the latter, with firm self-possession, restrains it in obedience to an instinct for perfect form, while the romantic, in a mood of excitement, gives it free rein; the instinct for form is by no means conspicuous in *The Excursion*, or *Prometheus Unbound*. The classic designs with clarity of outline; the romantic is purposefully vague, and is prone to run riot in decoration and colour; the classic presents emotion pure and intense, the romantic seeks out shades of feeling and powers in nature which can only be half distilled into words; the classic tends, on the whole, towards a statuesque type, the romantic prefers to suggest veiled immensities and indefinable ecstasies. These are general statements, but, if there is any truth in them, the early nineteenth century, though it is called romantic, produces masterpieces in both kinds; the "bare sheer penetrating power" which Matthew Arnold emphasises in Wordsworth is, for instance, classic; but, in the main, the

works we are to discuss would fall under the other category.

2. Poetry from 1798 to 1832

William Wordsworth, 1770–1850, in *Descriptive Sketches*, and Coleridge, in *Religious Musings*, had both written verse not distinguishable from some of that of the eighteenth century before their intimacy at Stowey led to the staking out of the complementary claims of the natural and the imaginative in poetry. The significant portions of Wordsworth's development are told in his *Prelude*, 1805 (not published till 1850), a confessional monologue, which proves him, like Milton, an egoist with an unshakable conviction of his mission to teach, and shows, too, how much of his poetry was of the stuff of his own emotions and reflections. His mind—deep, slow-moving, but not speculatively comprehensive—took profound impressions in his youth; after the moral crisis at about the age of thirty he was not often open to fresh imaginative stimulus. The consequences are, first, that much of his voluminous later work is repetition in a muffled voice of what had already been faultlessly uttered, and, secondly, that many large tracts of experience were closed to him; for instance, comedy, the tumultuous side of sex, individual enmities and many aspects of beauty outside nature. *The Prelude* modifies the usual picture of Wordsworth as a staid, austere, ruminative person; his youth at least was adventurous and impetuous, while his first experiences of nature were of its formidable conscience-haunting aspects. An impulsive

Wordsworth

idealism led him to take his third Cambridge vacation in France, where he participated in the high hopes of the Girondists. The turn given to these hopes by Robespierre left him without faith, and the rational doctrines of Godwin's *Political Justice* availed nothing against his spiritual unrest and despair. His sister, Dorothy, diagnosed the malady and prescribed a life amid the temperate stillness and calm power of nature. The intensity of the crisis imprinted the cause of recovery deeply in his mind, and he became the high priest of a new gospel. Moreover, in the simple folk who dwelt closest to the soil he realised the value of the feeling and charity condemned by Godwin, and the poignancy of the primeval events which "having been must ever be." At this propitious moment, he made the acquaintance of Coleridge, who helped to kindle his imaginative and expressive power; together, they projected *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798; between this date and 1807, most of Wordsworth's enduring work was written, though he lived, winning slow but sure recognition, till 1850. Like all nature poets, he had great descriptive skill, whether of minute or larger aspects; but nature was, for him, much more than a gallery of magnificent landscapes, or a background for action, or even a scene whose physical elements might seem to sort with varying human moods; for him, man and nature have spiritual identity, and his endeavour was to pierce to the spirit that "impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought and rolls through all things." The heart of his creed, as affirmed in *Tintern Abbey*, 1798, is that the refreshing of worn spirits, the inspira-

Poetry of nature

tion to kindliness and goodwill, the perception of truth, the power to see into the life of things, come through continued intercourse with nature and the contemplative rapture which it induces in those who are properly attuned and wisely passive. In the noble *Fragment from the Recluse*, however, this passivity is replaced, in part, by a vital creative effort of imagination working upon the world, an idea akin to Coleridge's "In our life alone does nature live." There are many corollaries to such a doctrine, and they form the basis of many of Wordsworth's lyrics—that the beauty of nature could be transmuted into human frame and feature, as in "Three years she grew"; that the woods, the starry sky, and the lonely hills could inform the soul with the noblest learning, as in *Brougham Castle*, *The Tables Turned*, and *Expostulation and Reply;* that memories are ineffaceable and bring in their train a wealth of consolation and delight, as in *Daffodils*, and *Stepping Westward;* and that obedience to duty is the condition of stability, repose, and joy, as in the *Ode to Duty*. The sum of his beliefs on much of this matter may be found in the discussions of the Wanderer and the Solitary in Books I and II of *The Excursion*, 1814, while, in later books the Pastor illustrates them in the lives of his parishioners.

Poetry of man

Much of Wordsworth's poetry of man is involved, therefore, in his poetry of nature; in the *Fragment from the Recluse* he announced the novelty of his theme, the exquisite mutual fitness of the mind of man and the external world. We may regard this aspect of his work under three main headings, of childhood, of rustic life, and of liberty and patriotism.

i. His poetry of childhood is tinged by the remembrance of his own infancy, when the world had been lighted by some bright gleam which he interpreted to be the result of a spiritual vision freshly come from a celestial home. He thinks of his mature imaginings as efforts to recapture the truths which infancy possesses without effort; this is the meaning of the line, "The child is father of the man," which prefaces the great *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, 1803–6. The ode records the passing of this vision with the years; yet the bonds of the two worlds are not altogether severed; sometimes, still, a sound, a recollection is wafted from those mightier waters to this smaller earth; and, in compensation for the loss, there is gained the deep human experience which modulates its grief into sympathy; on this part of the ode, the best comment is contained in *Tintern Abbey* and in the *Peele Castle* lines. His other poems of childhood have some touches of insight, but in the main, childhood remained an abstraction to him.

Childhood

ii. The poems of rustic life are based on his belief that there "the essential passions of the heart speak a plainer and more emphatic language"; if with this we link his principle that "the feeling developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling," we fathom his intention in *The Affliction of Margaret*, *Michael*, *Ruth*, *The Brothers*, *Resolution and Independence*, the Matthew poems, and those of the Lucy who dwelt near his Cumberland home. The narratives are bare, almost trivial, but they have the suffusion of intense pure

Rustic life

feeling, pathetic or tragic, and need no other appeal. These poems of children, peasants, and half-witted creatures at first stirred repugnance; they are now thought by some to be among the most characteristic of his writings. He is not quite a realist, his rustics are not always real rustics, but the feelings are real feelings, the deepest, simplest, and most widespread that we know.

Liberty and patriotism

iii. Liberty, the first high aim of the French Revolution, was a rallying cry for all these romantic poets, but the interpretations of it varied widely. For Wordsworth, liberty had always a close relation with discipline in the individual. In another sense, as in the sonnet "The world is too much with us," it meant freedom from material fetters. Again, in sonnets such as *The Venetian Republic*, and "It is not to be thought of," it lifted him to a larger historic utterance than did any other subject. His patriotism was a call to England to wake from moral slumber, as in the sonnets which invoke Milton's name. Although his ideal of *The Happy Warrior* is pacific—a stoic self-control, a calm contempt of circumstance, an immovable faith in good and honour—yet he had a spark of pugnacity in him which is fanned to a flame in his martial summons *To the Men of Kent.*

Other influences touched him from time to time; Milton was his model in his numerous sonnets—he was a great practiser and experimenter of metrical forms; the reading of Vergil suggested to him his *Laodamia*, 1814; Scott, his faintly romantic *Brougham Castle*, and *The White Doe*, 1807. Finally, one should note in him much of that kind of poetry whose main

appeals are through vague suggestion, subtle rhythm, and magical halo, such, for instance, as *Yew-Trees*, the sonnet on *King's College Chapel* and *The Solitary Reaper*.

Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772–1834, philosopher, psychologist, critic, talker, and journalist, as well as poet, took for his sphere, when he and Wordsworth projected *Lyrical Ballads*, "persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith."

His output was large and varied, as we shall see, but his genius was supremely exercised by the kind of theme thus defined; *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan* all belong to his *annus memorabilis*, 1797–8. An opium dream gave birth to *Kubla Khan* with its voluptuous pictorial splendour, its sounds echoing from wild mysterious haunts, its workings of occult powers, and its weird and fascinating harmonies of rhythm. *The Ancient Mariner* is a model in little of the whole of one aspect of romanticism. Its appeal is to the imagination, it is impregnated with the supernatural; in remote, untrodden regions, the poet describes scenes of arctic cold or sultry tropical heat, the dwelling-places of the uncanny omens and superstitions of sailors; to each scene he gives a vigour of outline, a brilliance of colour, and curiously real sounds, that bewitch us into granting the "willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith." With the same au-

dacity, he enchains our interest in a series of outlandish events and figures breaking abruptly upon the vision, the Ancient Mariner, the albatross, the phantom ship, the dead men rising, the crimson lights, and the angels' songs; there are, too, homely things such as the harbour, the wedding feast, and the praying hermit; enough to remind us faintly that we are in a dream. Nature plays a significant part in the whole effect; the vaster elements, the sun, the sea, the stars, and, above all, the moon are drawn with a few bold impressive strokes; in contrast, there is the fresh murmuring beauty of the month of June; there are, too, the albatross and the watersnakes, the imaginative counterparts of the animals in Cowper and Burns; nature, moreover, has a strange sympathy with the events of the story, for some upheaval or portent precedes each supernatural happening; the most impressive imagery is from the same source, "At one stride came the dark," "I pass like night from land to land." The simplicity of wording throughout is matched by the choice of metre, the simple ballad form, rich in traditions to which Coleridge and Keats above all were most delicately sensitive. All this abundant stuff of romance is steadied by a sure art, ennobled by seriousness and beauty, and its unity is secured in the action and suffering of the Mariner, in his moods of remorse, loneliness, gloom, fear, penitence, and calm, portrayed with a psychology as true as it is subtle. *Christabel* chooses a medieval background and makes brilliant use of its chivalric trappings; its second part, indeed, is Scott-like and definite, though the famous lines on severed friendship are beyond the scope of Scott. But the first part is

Coleridge's masterpiece; it pictures a world full of foreboding, every movement and sound is a whisper of doom, and the simple words seem to tremble with a secret menace; inexplicable, overmastering terror pervades the scene, "A thing to dream of, not to tell," which spreads its maleficent tyranny out through the air, "The night-birds all that hour were still." The invisible deformity of Geraldine, like the more gracious influences which Wordsworth knew, is "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart." The four-beat measure of the poem, though not as original as Coleridge thought it, gave potent aid to the music of poetry, and Scott, though with a less fine ear, tried it in the *Lay*, and Byron in *The Siege of Corinth*.

The promise of this sudden fertile spring in 1798 was unfulfilled: the rest of his life was given to philosophy, eloquence, and criticism, and everywhere he was dogged by his malady of irresolution and his besetting sin of drug-taking. Most of what is memorable, therefore, in his voluminous production, is to be sought among the writings of his youth; there are poems of the romantic kind, *Alice du Clos*, *The Dark Ladye*, *Lewti*, and *Love;* Wordsworthian poems such as *The Nightingale* and *Fears in Solitude* and other descriptive pieces; poems inspired by childhood, especially by his own son, Hartley, such as *Frost at Midnight;* poems, also, which give us the inward experience from which he wove his spectral dreams, such as *The Pains of Sleep*, and *Dejection*, which records the loss of his shaping power of imagination and the failure for him of the doctrine of the healing of nature. Still, there remain his vigorous translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, and his political odes, *To the Departing Year*,

1796, and *France*, 1798, which last utters a revulsion, parallel to that of Wordsworth, from the hopes earlier inspired by the Revolution.

Southey

Robert Southey, 1774–1843, was a relative by marriage of Coleridge and the friend of Wordsworth, the "Lepidus of the triumvirate" once called the Lake school. He formed a colossal project of writing epics on the mythologies with which his omnivorous reading had made him acquainted; the fruits of this project were his narratives *Thalaba*, 1801 (a favourite of Shelley), *Madoc*, 1805, *The Curse of Kehama*, 1810, and *Roderick, the last of the Goths*, 1814, perhaps the best of these epics, because, from early years, Southey had had a keen affection for the poetry of Spain and Portugal. The romantic instinct for adventurous story, unfamiliar scenery, and pageantry is evident; but neither in Wordsworth's nor in Coleridge's way could he produce the illusion of reality; the poems have a bookish inflexibility of imagination for all their purity of diction and careful versification. Some of his ballads and lyrics, tragic and humorous, have won more favour than is accorded to his ambitious epic narratives.

Scott

To Sir Walter Scott, 1771–1832, fell the task of commending romance to the public taste, and this he did by the verse-tales written between the years of Trafalgar and Waterloo, among them *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 1805, *Marmion*, 1808, *The Lady of the Lake*, 1810, and *The Lord of the Isles*, 1815. He was nearer to the still widespread tradition of the past century, that part of it, at least, which derives from Fielding,

than the other romantic poets, and so gained a hearing more quickly. After a hundred years of sedentary poetry, of argument, satire, and melancholy, he restored one of the Homeric functions, the representation of physical action; the tale came to its own again in the wake of the ballad. Scott, like some other poets, began writing ballads in emulation of the German poet Bürger's *Lenore;* he published *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 1802–3, but he soon turned to the tale, enhancing its appeal by his directness and simplicity, by his unerring instinct for the salient features of scenery and place, and by his pictures of border life, with its feuds and chivalries; he was nourished on its history and ballads and folk-memories. He makes, in addition, a high appeal to national consciousness, as may be seen in his tributes to Nelson, Fox, and Pitt. His rhythm, like a moss-trooping gallop, is not always free from commonplace (though he has a keen sense of the music of names); he draws character in broad outline; but whatever he lacks in subtlety he makes up in a singularly healthy manliness of temper. Yet his finest art is not in his tales, but in his lyrics; in *The Pibroch*, *Coronach*, *Brignall Banks*, *County Guy*, *Proud Maisie*, and in a dozen others, he is perfect.

Byron

The personality of George Gordon, Lord Byron, 1788–1824, has, for later ages, unduly obscured his poetic work; the tempestuous egoism, volume of passion, irrepressible confessions of the poet, and the romantic variety of his adventures attract and repel. Like Shelley, he was a votary of freedom; though, at first, it meant for him the freedom of the individual will, the conception

becomes loftier in *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and, in the glorious end of his career, he became the advocate of the awakening nationality of Greece. *Hours of Idleness*, 1807, did not foretell the real lyrical talent which he afterwards developed, whether of the resounding martial type of *Sennacherib*, or the curiously explanatory passion of "When we two parted" and "There's not a joy the world can give," or the pure magic of "There be none of Beauty's daughters"; personal passions and recollections seem to inspire the longer-breathed *Dream* and *Darkness*. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1809, is a piece of youthful bluster, but with the promise of power. It indicates his satirical temper and his sympathy with the school of Pope. Fame came to him with his descriptive itinerary *Childe Harold*, i and ii, 1812, where partly the imagined character, and partly the historic and heroic memories of southern Europe won the instant ear of the public. Before parts iii and iv, 1816–17, were written, Byron had become an exile in Italy and an intimate of Shelley. The infinitely wider power of these later cantos is due to these causes, as is likewise the stronger feeling for mountain and ocean which recurs in *Manfred* and *Don Juan*, where, as in Shelley, it is interwoven with passion. Italy, at the same time, inspired his poems to *Venice*, *Tasso*, and *Dante*, 1819. By his series of verse tales from *The Giaour*, 1813, to *The Island*, 1823, he drove Scott from Scott's own field; in the earlier half-dozen tales, with their pictures of oriental and southern crime, headlong passion, exotic scenery, and savage realism, he delineates "the Byronic hero." Conrad, Lara, and the rest of them pass through the stages

of unnatural crime, guilt-stricken conscience, fevered energy, and cynical contempt, to a final angry isolation; the type is pictured for the last time in Byron's greatest non-satirical work, *Manfred*. Another drama, *Cain*, depicts a different kind of guilty rebel. His dramas of political intrigue, *Marino Faliero*, 1820, and *The Two Foscari*, are *tours de force;* they have now no advocates. But, whilst writing them, Byron was discovering that the heroic and romantic were not his spheres; satire, realism, the normal levels of life, these are the materials of his abiding work in *Don Juan*, 1818–22, the fully accomplished successor to his experimental *Beppo*. The loosely strung episodes of *Don Juan*, the rapid changes of emotional key, the swift revulsions from sentiment to mockery, the uncensored report of everything seen or experienced, the total disregard of decorum, exactly fitted Byron's matured genius, as did the *ottava rima* measure, to which, at his best, he gave a new perfection. His expression here attains the rightness and precision of his *Letters;* the torrent of vivid diction, colloquial and unsought, sweeps rhythm, rime, wit, dialogue, and rhetoric along with it in its abounding power. *The Vision of Judgment*, 1822, a parody of Southey's poem to George III of the same title, is the most sustained piece of satirical invective in English. When Byron has passed the stage of Titanic posing, power is his supreme quality, and his power is not only a mental tonic, but it carries us past his careless craftsmanship and all the faults which are set in high relief by his nearness to Shelley and Keats.

The poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792–1822, reflects the complexity of his character. Some of

his actions, his ill-starred marriage, his visions and propaganda leave the impression not so much of a child as of a spirit from another sphere, not moving in the orbit of common men—thinking this life but the interlude of a nightmare. Yet there were many ways in which he stood in quite normal relations with his fellows; a fascinating and companionable figure is revealed, for instance, in his *Letter to Maria Gisborne* and in *Julian and Maddalo*. But there were in him almost irreconcilable traits of dejection and of idealism; his *Euganean Hills* embodies both moods. His pessimism becomes morbid in some of his self-portrayals in *Adonais*, and in *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples*. It takes the form, at other times, of an acute sense of isolation, as in *Alastor*, though this mood gives rise to some of his supreme work, expressing the desire for ideal companionship in *The Sensitive Plant* and the fulfilment of this desire in the fervid passion and symbolic backgrounds of *Epipsychidion*, the poem which best illustrates his debt to Plato's *Symposium*. Perhaps, also, out of the same root of dejection sprang the complete abandonment of himself to the immense elemental forces of nature, which is illustrated in the *Ode to the West Wind*, and in the close of *Adonais*.

Shelley

His all-pervading idealism inspires, first of all, his lifelong battle with oppression. In his generation, the watchword of liberty won back some of the glamour it had had for Wordsworth; tyrannies and monarchies had been restored in Greece, Italy, France, and Spain. The early *Revolt of Islam*, 1818, the *Ode to Liberty*, ennobled by historic imagination, the *Ode to Naples*, and *Hellas*, 1822, invoke freedom and,

at the same time, arraign priest and king and tyrant, as, with an intenser hate, do his political satires, chief among them *The Masque of Anarchy*, 1819. In *Prometheus Unbound*, 1820, the object of his scorn is the traditional and dogmatic conception of God. Prometheus stands for the saviours of mankind, Jupiter for the tyrant God, created by custom and ruling by fear, who is dethroned by the rising of Demogorgon, the spirit of justice, dwelling in eternity. There follows in Act IV the lyric rapture, a great chorus of spirit voices, which celebrates the rejuvenation of the earth. None of the poets prophesies larger hopes for man than Shelley, who owes something in this respect to the better part of Godwin. The poet pictures an earth overflowing with love and joy, its inhabitants sceptreless, equal, just, gentle, wise. But, with his generous vehement mind, he effects the transition to the golden age at one prodigious stroke. He had little faculty for enquiry, for the slow accumulation of experience, for the testing of hypothesis, for the dreary journey between the intractable real and the visionary ideal. This failing has laid him open to the charge that he lacks humanity, that, in Matthew Arnold's words, he is no more than "a beautiful ineffectual angel." Nevertheless he is intensely in earnest in his religion of universal love and freedom. The assertion of the supremacy of love and freedom would no doubt have been the solution of his last enigmatic fragment, *The Triumph of Life*. His theory of the One, the encircling creative mind, is not clearly elaborated, but is partially expressed in the triumphant close of *Adonais* (his splendid elegy on Keats), in *Mont Blanc*, and in his

prose *Defence of Poetry*. Shelley is one of the poets' poets; everything that passes through his mind becomes saturated in poetry; but the singularity of his gift is that he obliterates the defining line between matter and spirit, between the solid earth and man's thought, between the real and the imagined; the two are involved together in his "translucent" pictures of nature, especially regarding the more lawless things, wind, sea, and light; but all his imagery, perpetually recurring yet always fresh, has this quality of mingling the spiritual and the material. He has the Turner-esque vision which sees and retains the splendid moments, the ethereal hues, the spiritual beauty and power of a scene; any of his numerous voyages by rivers, caverns, oceans, and mountain sides, in *Alastor*, *The Witch of Atlas*, and other poems, will serve as illustration. He is no great creator of characters; his analytic mind reduced them, in *Adonais*, for instance, to abstractions, which move in the middle region between earth and spirit. There is, however, one striking and masterly exception, *The Cenci*, 1819, a drama of Italian lust and revenge, which, in its power and objectivity, and in its picture of the wronged Beatrice Cenci, rivals the later Elizabethans; here, the poet purposely eschewed what he called "mere poetry." But "mere poetry" was his native element, as one may see in his wealth of lyric verse. Shakespeare, Burns, and Shelley are the monarchs of English lyric; in swift energy of thought, in miraculous melody, in emotional ecstasy, in profuse imagery, and, at times, in a rare faculty of myth-making, we shall search in vain for the peers of songs such as "Worlds on worlds are rolling ever," "My soul is like a boat," "The

world's great age begins anew," *The Cloud*, *Arethusa*, *To a Skylark*, "I arise from dreams of thee," "Swiftly walk over the western wave," "Rarely, rarely, comest thou," and many others. Finally, mention must be made of a number of excellent translations, the best of them from Greek.

Keats

John Keats, 1795–1821, was but faintly touched by the political revolution, but his early *Sleep and Poetry*, 1817, proves him conscious of the revolution in literature. The first awakening of his art came through his introduction by Leigh Hunt to Spenser, Sandys, and other Jacobean poets, from whose influence he never entirely escaped. It was from them, as much as from Lemprière's *Dictionary*, that he gathered his knowledge of classical story. Chapman's *Homer*, he celebrated in one of his most perfect sonnets, a form in which he rivals the greatest masters. Beauty was the magnet to his imagination; it drew him to Grecian art and mythology, to the Middle Ages and to nature. *Endymion*, 1818, is a mingled yarn of luscious scenes and veiled allegory, with many faults (which the poet himself acknowledged in his manly preface) of diction, verse, and feeling. It is "prentice work" and yet contains such things as the ode to Pan, the song to sorrow, and the Bacchic chorus. But his conception of Hellenism was to be clarified and exalted by his growing imaginative powers and, perhaps, by the influence of the Elgin marbles. In expression, he was never quite what Shelley called him, a Greek; the Elizabethan habit of beautiful interpolation remained to the end in different degrees in *Hyperion*, and in the odes, *To a Grecian Urn*, *To Psyche*, and *To Maia*. The ode *To a*

Grecian Urn contrasts the disappointing satisfactions of life with the arrested but expectant joyousness of art, and closes with a tenet of which all his work is an expansion, "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty." *Hyperion* remains a fragment, though the poet attempted to complete it, while removing its excessive Miltonic inversions. The Miltonic theme, the defeat of the Saturnian gods, and something of Milton's epic scale and verse structure persist; the poem is Keats's highest intellectual reach, and, in the words of Oceanus and Mnemosyne, it embodies his final conception of beauty, as it is enriched by the elements of memory, power, and sorrow.

His imagination pierced just as unerringly into the poetic aspects of the Middle Ages. In his tales *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *The Eve of St. Mark*, the scenes pass like the slow unfolding of rich tapestries; the mind is constantly being engaged by new beauties of cunning decoration, of surprising contrast in colour, shape, and sound. *Lamia*, the story of the serpent-woman, is in the kind of heroic couplet which Keats learned, curiously enough, from Dryden. The brief unearthly masterpiece *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is supreme in its class; it is compounded of bitter personal sorrow, of nature, of chivalry, faery, enchantment, magic, dream, and mortal horror; it is told in ballad form with a consummate reticence befitting its ghostly theme, the undoing of men by evil powers, which use beauty as their lure.

Keats's conception of nature was sensuous: colour, shape, sound, perfume, and touch make their simultaneous siege on the senses in, for instance, *Psyche*, and in the flawless *Autumn*. There is the same

concreteness when he pictures the haunt of the nightingale, the verdurous glooms, moss-carpeted, flower-scented, thrilled with sound, which entrance him to wish, like Shelley, for death. The *Nightingale* ode, however, is a revelation of mood, like the odes on *Indolence* and *Melancholy*, whose long-hidden shrine the poet discovers, by a finely imagined paradox, in the very temple of delight. The magical perfection of the phrasing in these odes is the gift which entitles Keats, in Matthew Arnold's words, to rank "with Shakespeare." Of his other poems, the Mermaid tavern lines, *Fancy*, *Robin Hood*, and "Bards of Passion" are delightful, as is the song "In a drear-nighted December"; the dramas *Otho* and *King Stephen* and the comic poem *The Cap and Bells* are almost negligible.

Other poets

Of Landor's voluminous poetry, some of the best, as in the mythic and idyllic *Hellenics*, 1846, is marked by definite form, classic purity of language, and appropriateness of imagery; of many exquisite short verses, *Rose Aylmer* is the most famous. With one aspect of Wordsworth we may associate *The Farmer's Boy*, 1800, of Robert Bloomfield and the *Descriptive Poems*, 1820, of John Clare. The nearest akin to Scott is James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, whose *Queen's Wake*, 1813, shows an intimate understanding of the ballad, while, in *The Poetic Mirror*, 1816, he skilfully parodied Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, and himself; his *Kilmeny* is a graceful fairy tale. With Byron, we should most naturally associate his biographer, Thomas Moore, whose largest work, *Lalla Rookh*, 1817, is a collection of gorgeous Eastern tales, embroidered on a prose ground,

brilliant in a kind of facile melody and narrative. He is somewhat stronger in his lyric poetry, which was inspired to patriotism by Emmet, as in *Irish Melodies*, 1807–34. He has also a gift of stinging banter in his satirical squibs *The Twopenny Post-Bag* and *The Fudge Family in Paris*, 1818, exercising a pungent and ingenious wit upon the regent and Castlereagh. The mantle of Shelley fell, if anywhere, upon Thomas Lovell Beddoes, though Beddoes is equally of the tribe of the Elizabethan dramatists of mortality in his *Death's Jest Book*, 1850; perhaps his rarest power is shown in some of his lyrics, such as the enchanting *Dream Pedlary*. Nearer to Keats stand his friends Leigh Hunt (*The Story of Rimini*, 1816), Thomas Hood (*The Midsummer Fairies*, 1827, and *Eugene Aram*), and John Hamilton Reynolds (*The Garden of Florence* and *The Fancy*). Hood is better remembered for many comic poems, though his constitutional bent was towards tragedy; his humanitarian verses, such as *The Song of the Shirt*, ring true. A fiercer writer is Ebenezer Elliott, whose *Corn Law Rhymes* belong to 1831. Lamb, Hartley Coleridge in his sonnets, and Wolfe win their places in anthologies by one or two triumphs. Parody, whether of poetical or political absurdities, produces some of its classic triumphs in *The Anti-Jacobin*, 1797–8, by Ellis, Hookham Frere, and Canning; *The Needy Knife-Grinder*, for instance, victimises the sentimental revolutionism and hapless metrical inventions of Southey, and *The Loves of the Triangles* ridicules the misdirected poetic energies of Erasmus Darwin. The *Rejected Addresses*, 1812, of James and Horace Smith pink some of the foibles

of Crabbe, Scott, Moore, and other poets of the time.

3. Prose from 1800 to 1832

The prose of the period is almost equally swayed by the revolutionary and romantic interests, but, until we come to Carlyle, there is nothing of the sweep of Burke and Gibbon; the memorable writing of 1790–1832 is in the novel or in essay and criticism.

I. The novel. Scott

We have already traced the history of the novel down to Jane Austen. As in her case, Scott had much of the eighteenth century in him; he is in the succession of Fielding and Smollett. But he vastly extended its province, inventing the historical novel and adding other elements of the largest promise. He turned from the verse tale in 1815 and wrote, in all, thirty-one novels. He began with Scottish history, dealing with the events of 1745 in *Waverley*, the covenanters in *Old Mortality*, and Mary Queen of Scots in *The Abbot*. With *Ivanhoe*, 1820, began his tales of English history and the Middle Ages; to this group belong, also, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Woodstock*, and *Kenilworth*. Foreign scenes are the background of *The Talisman* and *Quentin Durward;* of the more domestic kind, *Guy Mannering*, *St. Ronan's Well*, and *The Heart of Midlothian* are all masterpieces. Scott established the European canons of the historical novel, in regard to the proportions of history and invention, the general fidelity of portraiture of known persons and their exclusion, in the main, from the central places in the tale, the broadly accurate realisation of past national life in

profuse and picturesque detail, the credible play of public events upon private fortunes, and the adoption of a slightly archaic speech. To these things, he added a romantic care for local scenery, steeped in the atmosphere of memory and affection. He comes nearest to Shakespeare in the fecundity and diversity of his creations. Just exception may be taken to some of his inanimate heroes and heroines and their rhetorical dialogue; but, in the representation of national types, especially of all ranks of Scots, from monarch to crofter, speaking their native dialect, and, in particular, when pitted against the Sassenach, he has amazing truth and vitality; in his command of the supernatural, his *Wandering Willie's Tale* is not to be surpassed. Some of his most effective characterisation is achieved in his prefatory figures, such as Cleishbotham and Old Mortality. We may always rely on him for fine chivalry, courageous loyalty, shrewd humour, and true pathos. His large, sane, and vigorous personality, and its struggle with disaster at the close, afforded material for a classic biography, the *Life*, by his son-in-law Lockhart. Neglecting minor novelists, two others must be mentioned before we come to the great Victorians; J. J. Morier, whose *Hajjî Baba*, 1824, is an entertaining and veracious chronicle of the East; and Thomas Love Peacock, who satirised, in conversation-novels like *Crotchet Castle*, 1831, the manias and singularities of poets and philosophers; whilst, in *Maid Marian*, 1822, he gave, with a tonic admixture of satire, an entrancing picture of the times which inspired Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Peacock sprinkles his novels with lyrics like an Elizabethan romancer;

his Attic purity of style and fineness of wit have been unduly neglected.

II. Criticism

Most of the poets exercised themselves also in criticism; Wordsworth in his prefaces, Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*, 1817, Scott in the introductory parts of his novels, Southey in many reviews and biographies (out of which grew his classic lives of Nelson and of Wesley), Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry*, a subtle and eloquent study of the working of creative imagination, Keats and Byron in their brilliant *Letters;* all reflected upon and discussed their individual relations to poetry. Of these, Coleridge ranged farthest; he was probably influenced by Schlegel in his formulation of an æsthetic philosophy based on a distinction between imagination and fancy, to which Wordsworth also gave his assent. There was another equally important mission for criticism, to recover the buried riches of English renascence literature. In this quest, Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Scott (as in his lives of Dryden and of Swift), were all engaged. Coleridge, though his work is preserved only in fragments in *Biographia Literaria*, and in notes on Elizabethan drama, is the most original; for, with a poet's sensitiveness and a philosopher's analytic insight, he imagines afresh the conditions of creation in another mind and traces the steps in the evolution of a masterpiece; on all estimates of Shakespeare and Wordsworth since his day he has left an abiding impress. Lamb's different way may be seen in the fact that some of his best criticism of Shakespeare is in essays on actors; the human aspect of literature was

Coleridge

more to him than the critical. His brief inspired notes to his perfect anthology, *Specimens of the Dramatic Poets*, 1808, are the high-water mark of impressionist criticism. His fine insight enables him, in his *Tales from Shakespear*, 1807 (the comedies were done by his sister Mary), to retain the "exact emphasis of the original."

William Hazlitt, 1778–1830, in works written between 1817 and 1820, *The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, *The English Poets*, *The English Comic Writers*, has left a body of sane, spirited, human judgment in a manner which infects the reader with the critic's own enjoyment; his standards, like Lamb's, are personal, but he takes a wider range, seeing character not in isolation, but in contact with other men and manners; he has even more of the pure zest—"gusto" he calls it—of letters than Dryden. De Quincey, also, must have a niche here, both for his share in the elucidation of *Macbeth*, and for his essays on rhetoric and style, where he formulates the illuminating distinction between the literature of knowledge and that of power.

III. The essay

The essay cannot be sharply divided from criticism. The magazines, *The Edinburgh*, *The Quarterly*, *Blackwood's*, *The London*, and *Fraser's*, provided a means of expression and sometimes a means of livelihood to writers such as Gifford, Southey, Hazlitt, Sydney Smith, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, and, later, Carlyle. Hazlitt's forceful, though not always just, review of notabilities in 1825, *The Spirit of the Age*, is only the last of a series in which brain-stuff, wit, sharp challenge, skilful overture, raciness, and exactness of

The magazines

writing are extraordinarily abundant. The lively and copious *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of John Wilson (Christopher North) appeared in *Blackwood*. Walter Savage Landor, 1775–1864, is best remembered for his *Imaginary Conversations*, 1824–9, and for the extensions of them in *Pentameron* and *Pericles and Aspasia*. The speakers are men and women chosen from history, Hannibal, Marius, Godiva, Anne Boleyn, Spenser—there are hundreds of them; their speech is veined with lively human touches and with memories of idyllic scenes, but there is hardly any narrative fibre. His own independent and, in some ways, unadaptable principles are reflected; he is like Swinburne, a republican but no democrat. He is as cunning in another order of prose-writing as De Quincey, in contrast with whom he stands in the classic lucidity, lightness, and plastic beauty of his expression. Thomas De Quincey, 1785–1859, wrote work prodigious in bulk; besides criticism, he produced long essays such as those on the Cæsars and the Essenes; confessional prose, like the *Opium-Eater* and the *Autobiographical Sketches;* reviews of the works of his contemporaries, and stories and fantasias. In these last, he is greatest; his richly wrought prose, poetry in all but regularly recurrent rhythm, is perfect in narratives such as *The English Mail-Coach*, *The Spanish Military Nun*, and *The Revolt of the Tartars*, where his harmonious periods suggest, with immense power, the movement of multitudes over vast steppes and deserts, through unspeakable sufferings. The "prose of impassioned reverie" is seen in his *Dream Fugue* and in *Suspiria*. The shifting cloud-matter of dreams

Landor

De Quincey

is marshalled as logic orders it in the one; the profoundest tortures and despondencies of the mind are symbolised in the other. He perceived a psychological correspondence between vision and "rhythmus," and his ample cumulative periods cohere in ceremonious patterns, falling, at the same time, with infallible music upon the ear.

Lamb

Charles Lamb, 1775–1834, with his delicacy and strong understanding and waywardness, remains unique. The *Essays* and *Last Essays of Elia*, 1820–5, are intimate revelations of his tastes, antipathies, and moods. Three or four subjects engage him chiefly: old-fashioned London scenes, such as the Temple and India House; characters who inhabit them, possessing odd twists of habit and disposition; his near relations, painted with fine penetration and forbearance; matters, too, of comic extravagance, or of imaginative fantasy, or of pathetic wistful regret. All this is told by one who was rich in humanity, in love with life, who bore disastrous blows with fortitude. His most engaging quality, even more evident in his letters, is his humour; pun, repartee, grave exaggeration, grotesque narrative, whimsical turns of thought, reminiscent anecdote, kindly ridicule, delicate irony —he runs through the whole gamut of humour with the finest taste, and is equally sure in his pathos. His style, though intimately personal, extracts essences from many rare herbs, Jacobean prose writers, seventeenth century lyrists and dramatists; he is a connoisseur in words and prose rhythms; whether simple or elaborate, he makes them delicately flexible and adaptable to his moods. The im-

mensely voluminous democrat William Cobbett is a more pugnacious egoist; his political thought and utterance, in his *Weekly Political Register*, 1802–35, were not always strictly under control or strictly consistent, but he is saved for literature by his style, which is strong, simple, and direct. In his *Rural Rides* and in his *Advice to Young Men and Young Women*, 1830, where, sometimes, the softening light of memory falls upon the page, he is a classic writer, one whose sense of the purport of words is matched by economy in their use.

Cobbett

BOOK VI

THE VICTORIAN AGE

I. Currents of Thought

In 1832, the energies of the romantic revival were dispersed; thought, political and religious, comes more insistently into literature, and, in spite of the poetry of Tennyson, Browning, the pre-Raphaelites, and the Oxford poets, we are in an age of prose. Two main currents—with many tributaries—may be detected: the rationalist, an English tradition from Locke and Hume, confirmed in Benthamism and utilitarianism; and, on the other hand, the religious, culminating once in the Catholic reaction of the Oxford Movement, and, again, in the Broad Church party, with Maurice at its head. The rationalists are reinforced, first, by the widespread speculative doubt which Carlyle, Tennyson, and Browning sought to dispel in *Sartor Resartus*, *In Memoriam*, and *La Saisiaz;* secondly, by the vast evolutionary hypothesis of science, interpreted very largely in materialistic ways. Religious feeling was fostered by the transcendental philosophy which Coleridge unsystematically poured into the ears of clever young men at Highgate; Carlyle's ironic picture of him in the

Life of Sterling, is well known. Carlyle, however, was the most potent apostle of the new idealism, which was our largest debt to Germany; though it did not provide him with a working faith. The Oxford Movement turned back to medieval tradition by the assertion of authority in the church, by the appeal to feeling, and by the use of ritual; in this last, it showed an interesting approach to the pre-Raphaelites; Morris found much of his inspiration in the Middle Ages, and the same aspect in Scott powerfully attracted Newman. In politics, we become aware of the incarnation of some of the ideas of Rousseau in governmental forms when the Reform bill was passed in 1832. In many ways, democracy was foiled of its expression; but its demands and its hopes enter largely into the works of men so diverse in outlook as Dickens, Ruskin, and William Morris; the newspaper and the modern novel are the mouthpieces of the democratic state. Democracy and science join hands in trade, invention, and communication; for literature, their conjunction is more significant in the fiction of Thackeray, George Eliot, Dickens, and Thomas Hardy. Science produced its own masters of writing, the greatest of whom was Huxley.

2. Victorian Poetry, 1832–1900

Tennyson

As an artist, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1809–92, worked most securely in lyric and idyllic material; he was impelled, however, by the spirit of the age, to weave contemporary thought into his art. He sought to cope with his own profound grief at the death of Arthur Hallam

and to bring to terms his crumbling beliefs and the new doctrines of science in *In Memoriam*, 1850. He attained, finally, an optimism based on feeling, an instinctive conviction of immortality, and a sense of all-pervading Divine law, which were balm to the troubled spirits of his day. This closeness to his time gives his thought a bygone air, though the craftsmanship retains its primal beauty and skill. Under the same impulse, he wrote *Idylls of the King*, 1859–85, "shadowing Sense at war with Soul." Here are recorded the ideals and prowess of the knights of the Round Table, the organised powers of righteousness, and its disintegration, first by the guilty passion of Lancelot, next by the pursuit of the wandering fires of enthusiasm, as of the Grail, by men unfitted for the quest. The final note is, again, optimistic, as may be seen in the passage at the close on the changing of "the old order," and in the later poem *Merlin and the Gleam*. However lofty the ideal unfolded in them, the *Idylls* are now, in a manner, faded. If we bear in mind the art of Tennyson's predecessor Malory, it is easily seen that the fault lies in the treatment of the material; it cannot serve—Keats and Scott never tried to make it—as a vehicle for overt preaching. This judgment is confirmed when we see that the earlier-written idylls, such as *Morte d'Arthur*, with no allegorical interpolation, are of higher poetic worth. Tennyson could never quite command the large metaphysical utterance of Wordsworth and Shelley; we may note, too, that, in long poems, he is generally wanting in structural gift, though *Maud* is an exception. The conclusion is that these more ambitious works are not likely

to be the most prized; and the same sentence would apply—were it not for the sprinkling of magical lyrics—to *The Princess*, 1847, and to the historical dramas, with some reservation in the case of *Becket*, 1884. FitzGerald thought that Tennyson never advanced upon the two volumes of 1842. *Ulysses* represents his classically inspired verse (including his most powerful single poem *Lucretius*) in which he was uniformly triumphant; *Sir Galahad* and the *Lady of Shalott* show him gleaning in the Middle Ages, though he never proved himself a true medievalist; *Locksley Hall* prophesies later poems of social concern; *The Gardener's Daughter* is of the form of village idyll to which *Enoch Arden*, 1864, belongs. *The Dream of Fair Women* is the most exquisite of his too rare dream-galleries; "Break, break, break" illustrates, as does his swan-song, *Crossing the Bar*, the Tennysonian lyric, which crystallises deep-felt emotion round some fitting image in nature. His many volumes, down to the last, *The Death of Œnone*, 1892, comprise, besides these things, the lyrical monodrama *Maud*, 1855, which, along with overstrained melodramatic and morbid elements, embodies some of his most passionate and subtle writing; patriotic poems, finely tempered and stirring when celebrating heroic action, as in *The Revenge* and *The Heavy Brigade*, though, at times, sinking to insularity; and poems of character, to which belong his humorous dialect poems, *The Northern Farmer*, and others. He is a nature poet, of the order, though not with the fulness, of Keats; he broods expectantly before his object until vision and reflection generate the inevitable phrase; either in minute observation or broad

atmospheric effect, nature is an element in all his verse, though it has never the overmastering importance that it has in Wordsworth and Keats. He is a great "inventor of harmonies"; the lines to Vergil, to Milton, the blank verse of *Morte d'Arthur*, *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, the stanzas of *The Palace of Art*, and lyrics such as "Tears, idle tears," come instantly to mind. His vision of beauty is expressed with mastery of rhythm, phrasing, whether simple or gorgeous, sound-values, alliteration, haunting suggestion, and is adorned with innumerable allusions, the spoils of his wide and scholarly culture; and all is polished and perfected with an art only equalled by that of Pope among English poets.

Browning

Robert Browning, 1812–89, shares with Tennyson the supremacy of Victorian poetry, though his fame was slower of confirmation. He was remote from traditional schools of poetry and he had not Tennyson's flawless technique with which to win the public ear. Browning was a detached spectator, Tennyson a fellow-sufferer with his age; Browning, in a sense, was cosmopolitan; Tennyson, like Dickens, English to the core. Both were addicted to the contemporary habit—Browning more than Tennyson—of thinking religious things out in poetry; it is evident in *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, 1850; and *La Saisiaz*, 1878, is Browning's *In Memoriam*. Browning proved himself the subtler intellect, and, by temperament, the more convinced optimist. His poetry reflects politics little enough, and he takes from science chiefly what can be spiritually interpreted, as in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. Of his earlier poems, *Paracelsus*, 1835, remains one of

his most stimulating achievements; *Sordello*, 1840, completely discouraged his public. Something was retrieved, however, by the grace and power of *Pippa Passes*, 1841, the first of the series named *Bells and Pomegranates*. After many dramatic lyrics and romances in this series, and after a number of plays, the best of them *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, 1843, he came to his preordained form, the dramatic monologue, a comprehensive soliloquy absorbing into itself surrounding scenery and persons, and bringing all that is pertinent to the chosen moment by the channels of memory, association, and reflection. He employed this form in *Men and Women*, 1855, in *Dramatis Personæ*, 1864, and in *Dramatic Idyls*, 1879–80, in which last, action divides the interest with analysis. His agile curiosity, odd garnerings of knowledge, peculiar vigilant humour, and power of synthesising all into a consistent picture are illustrated in types of many lands and ages, as, for example, Karshish, Fra Lippo Lippi, the Bishop of St. Praxed's, Mr. Sludge, Bishop Blougram, Caliban, and Cleon. *Cleon* and *Artemis Prologises* remind us of Browning's high devotion to Greece, the best fruit of which was his *Balaustion's Adventure*, 1871; but his imagination moved more freely and surely in the Italy of the renascence. Though not quite a trustworthy critic, he was keenly interested in music and art, still more in the souls of musicians and artists; in the same way he regarded his lovers, most of whom, significantly, fail in their quest. All these poems give evidence of a subtle sense of character, as indicated by thoughts and longings before these crystallise into action; he lays bare the soul by the application

of a sudden test; nothing could be more unlike the long slow gradient of interest in Wordsworth's poems. Browning is sharply conscious of detail, of edges, of salient divisions in nature, humanity, and thought, especially if they border on the grotesque or evil. In a later series of poems, *The Ring and the Book*, 1868–9, *Fifine at the Fair*, 1872, *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, 1873, and *The Inn Album*, 1875, he seems to aim specifically at crushing truth out of pestiferous accumulations of falsehood. Of these, *The Ring and the Book* is his masterpiece, in respect of constructive power, cunning detail, vivid exposure of complex motive, unfaltering appropriateness of speech and outlook to each character in the ten-times repeated story, notably when he portrays the four most prominent characters, Guido, Caponsacchi, Pompilia, and the Pope. His last volume, *Asolando*, 1889, recalls his early freshness and wealth of lyric, and echoes again his lifelong creed that failure, evil, and misery are but opportunities for victory afforded by a far-seeing Divine Love to the immortal soul of man. "No weakness, no contempt" is true of Browning as of Milton. This robust energy and manliness, this grappling with the actual, in order to wring from it a heightened sense of the worth of life, this scorn of lethargy, though it may wear the mask of morality, are likely for long to make the poet a rare remedial and tonic companion. As to style, though it would be a grave error to suppose that he entirely eschewed grace, sweetness, and melodic variety to challenge attention by oddities and novelties, it is clear that his diction and rhythm have the quality of aggressive pungent singularity oftener than that of exquisite

beauty; he has a special fondness for the shock of the actual, in the midst of the imaginative picture, and for prosaic rhythms among those of poetry. It is unfortunate that he often lays himself open to a just charge of obscurity; it comes of over-swiftness of thought, of excess of detail, and of too great compression; but, perhaps, it is, in truth, a more serious charge that he too often falls back into the mood of prose.

Mrs. Browning

With him may be named his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose exquisite *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, 1850, are inspired by a rare passion and devotion. Her touch is surest in lyric, especially in the lyric of sympathy, as in *Cowper's Grave* and *The Cry of the Children;* but she also wrote romance like *The Romaunt of Margaret* and *The Rhyme of the Duchess May*, and celebrated the Italian struggle for liberty in *Casa Guidi Windows*, 1851, whilst her long verse novel, *Aurora Leigh*, 1857, has passages of insight, exaltation, and beauty, strongly phrased, though it exhibits many defects of style and construction. Most of her poems expose her extraordinary carelessness in rime.

Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold, 1822–88, seems, in his *Poems*, 1853, and *New Poems*, 1867, to retreat from life, baffled by its outward complexity; a tone of melancholy and loneliness pervades *Dover Beach*, a wistful consciousness that he could not attain the faith which he envied in others. This, with a deep reverence for truth and noble character, inspires *Rugby Chapel*, and some other poems, where a quiet beauty and rare distinction give way, at times, to a more poignant cry; the stoic resolution upon which he falls back is

the basis of poems of the type of *The Last Word*. A curious beauty haunts *The Forsaken Merman;* and fine natural descriptive powers are exercised in *The Scholar Gypsy* and in *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. He shows that he is finely sensitive to the spiritual thought of other poets—Goethe, Wordsworth, Heine, Byron, and Shakespeare—in *Memorial Verses*, the Obermann poems, *Heine's Grave*, and the sonnet on Shakespeare. *Merope* and his other classical poems are less marked by "excellent action," restraint, proportion, and keeping than are his admirable narratives *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Balder Dead*, with their limpid unencumbered speech, and his elegiac poems, above all, *Thyrsis*. This last is an elegy on Arnold's friend and fellow-student at Oxford, Arthur Hugh Clough, a mind of the same order, whose "piping took a troubled sound," like Arnold's. Clough's *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, 1848, has more elasticity of spirit and more humour than have any of Arnold's poems, and his lyrics, especially the memorable "Say not the struggle naught availeth," are inspired by stronger hopefulness of conviction.

Clough

The phrase pre-Raphaelite has reference to the colouring, the minute elaboration, and the religious mysticism of the early Italian painters. In poetry, it is a convenient title for anti-classical poets, such as the Rossettis, Morris, and, in part, Swinburne. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's translations, *Dante and his Circle*, 1861, remind us of his Italian blood; his *Poems*, 1870, and *Ballads and Sonnets*, 1881, give us *The Blessed Damozel*, the sonnet-sequence *The House*

The Pre-Raphaelites

D. G. Rossetti

of Life, and his London street poem *Jenny*. His ballads—historical, as in *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy*, menacing and unearthly in *Sister Helen*, and others which make use of the essentially romantic motive "the evil powers of nature assailing man through his sense of beauty"—are among his most notable work. *The House of Life* is a record of the passion and mystery of love; sensuous as its imagery often is, its intense emotion sets it spiritually aglow. There is no swift torrent of words, but the molten passion is moulded into exquisite pictorial shapes by the painter's regard for form and composition. All Rossetti's writing has slow fastidious distinctness, sumptuous phrasing, and close-packed imagery and subtle and varied musical appeal. His sister, Christina Rossetti, was much more spontaneous, as we may see in the delicate lyrical abandon and quick repetitions of songs such as *A Birthday;* her poems, mostly lyrical, are unique in their blending of opposite qualities, the power of miniature wizardry (in *Goblin Market*), the religious ecstasy of a finely devout spirit, the keen sense of physical beauty and colour, and subtle simplicity in rhythm and phrasing; she divides with Keble (*The Christian Year*) and Newman (*The Dream of Gerontius*) the title of the chief religious poet since Vaughan.

Christina Rossetti

William Morris, 1834–96, was the most voluminous of Victorian poets, and by far (though Rossetti was painter as well as poet) the most active in other decorative arts, for which he chose the general title "designing." He imitated the pictorial aspects of many other

William Morris

poets' work; Rossetti, Chaucer, Tennyson, Browning, and the sagas all left some impress on him. His prevailing inclinations were towards medieval forms, even when he tells the classical tale, *The Life and Death of Jason*, 1867, and the twelve classical stories which alternate with the twelve medieval and Oriental legends in *The Earthly Paradise*, 1868–70. This collection is after the fashion of *The Canterbury Tales*, though the tellers meet in a remote imaginary island. His earlier *Defence of Guenevere*, 1858, had a poignancy, a sense of bitter strife in the conscience, symbolised in colours and figures of a feverish brightness and sharpness, which disappeared from the "tapestry-work and low music" of *The Earthly Paradise*. For, here, we have, instead, brilliantly coloured shadows in a brilliantly coloured shadow land; a large equable movement, whether in stanza or couplet, a pervading note of melancholy, and no humour. Yet these are memorable retellings of famous tales, without the Tennysonian intrusions of sermon and counsel. Greater than these, however, are the poems, of epic rather than of romantic temper, inspired by the northern sagas, some of which Morris translated in prose as well as in verse. *Sigurd the Volsung*, 1876, has some of the berserk force, the immense passion, the heroic battling, the relentless spirit of the Scandinavian originals. He undertook other translations such as the *Odyssey*, the *Æneid*, and *Beowulf*. Of his prose romances, some picture medieval utopias, as *The Dream of John Ball*, others primitive Teutonic life, such as *The House of the Wolfings*, 1889; all are in a simple coloured prose which has the effect of poetry.

Other poets must be more briefly named: Dobell, author of the fine ballad *Keith of Ravelston;* Aytoun, now remembered for the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, which are humorous in intention, like *The Ingoldsby Legends* of R. H. Barham; W. M. Praed, whose "society" verse almost equals Prior's, and C. S. Calverley, a master of parody. Arthur O'Shaughnessy and Lord de Tabley wrote lyrics of fine musical power; P. J. Bailey, in the extraordinarily unequal *Festus*, 1839, and R. H. Horne, in *Orion*, 1843, are writers of epic verse. Coventry Patmore's *Odes* prove him a master of the theory and practice of rhythm. High thought and feeling, boldness of imagination, and mastery of poetic diction win for Francis Thompson his place among the major poets.

Other Poets

Three others remain to be spoken of, one at some length—Edward FitzGerald, George Meredith, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Among the poems of Meredith, the so-called sonnets *Modern Love*, give us one of his subtlest tragical studies of temperaments at war with one another. The song entitled *The Lark Ascending*, has a pure and marvellously sustained melody, as has also *The Woods of Westermain*, where the music is interwoven with the doctrine set out in *Earth and Man:* that earth, which has patiently fostered many generations, is the surest source of wisdom and health, however austere the discipline. FitzGerald, in *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, 1859, professed to translate the quatrains of a Persian poet; his version is, in fact, a poem of the nineteenth century, in an Eastern setting, the finest

Meredith

FitzGerald

imaginative expression of the creed of hedonism. FitzGerald seeks to drown the age-long questionings as to man's fate in the cup of voluptuous content. The questions, however, still echo through the verse and receive sardonic rejoinders. The wistful and ironic tone of the poem, its opulence of colour, bold and novel imagery, and the haunting music of the rhythm and stanza give it enduring charm.

Swinburne

With an intensely individual temper, Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1837–1909, unites a keen susceptibility to the influence of other poets. His deepest affinity is with Shelley, an earlier intellectual revolutionary, though Swinburne's creed insists more on liberty than on equality or fraternity; he has Shelley's antagonism to priests and kings, and Landor's paganism. The cause of liberty and the leaders in the cause, Mazzini and Hugo, inspire the great poems of his middle period, *A Song of Italy*, 1867, and *Songs before Sunrise*, 1871. Like Shelley, he has native kinship with the Greek poets; it is evident in *Atalanta in Calydon*, 1865, with its exquisitely musical choruses, and in the more austere *Erechtheus*, 1876. Like Shelley's, too, is his power of penetration into nature; his landscapes have the same expressiveness of mood. No English poet is to be compared with him, however, in the sense of the power and beauty and mystery of the sea, as shown in *A Forsaken Garden*, *By the North Sea*, *A Swimmer's Dream*, and many another poem. The spirit of rebellion, of insurgent youth, inspires his *Poems and Ballads*, 1866; while *Laus Veneris* and *Dolores*, show his keen sense of feminine beauty. Nothing is hidden of the animal stirrings,

the languor and revulsions of love, of passion, with its train of exaltation and bitterness, and of death, whose wide empire of quiet promises relief from the ache of intolerable desire. This exotic material, recorded in marvellously musical verse, is less prominent in the *Poems and Ballads* of 1878 and of 1889, and other volumes of lyric verse. Other themes—patriotism; ballads of the sea; a series of memorial poems, including those to Landor, Kossuth, Baudelaire (the beautiful and disturbing *Ave atque Vale*), Marlowe (*In the Bay*); sonnets on Elizabethan dramatists;—mingle with his poems of liberation. Other volumes included splendid medieval romances, *Tristram of Lyonesse*, 1882, and *The Tale of Balen*, 1896; and also his dramatic trilogy, *Chastelard*, 1865, *Bothwell*, 1874, and *Mary Stuart*, 1881, each of which shows how lasting upon him was the influence of the Elizabethans. We may sometimes feel that he conjures too readily with the poet's symbols—stars, wind, storm, light, spray, sleep, pair, sorrow, death—and that the facile silver tones and the easy emphasis of alliteration can hardly be consonant with deeply felt passion. Yet he is a pioneer, and remains the sovereign of a new kingdom of rhythm and metrical form. In intricate and dainty forms such as the triolet and ballade, in billowy roller-like measures as in the *Hymn to Proserpine*, in the stanzas of *The Garden of Proserpine*, *Itylus*, and other poems, with brief, strong closing lines, and in the transformed couplet of *Tristram* (to name only a few cases), he brought to light inexhaustible springs of new metrical art.

3. The Victorian Novel

Charles Dickens, 1812–70, wrote best when his subjects were those of memory and observation; poverty oppressed his childhood and youth, and in those days he acquired intimate knowledge of the lower classes and of London street life; the imprisonment of his father, the original of Micawber, accounts for a number of pictures of debtors' prisons; his experience as a reporter took him to provincial towns, travelling by coach and sojourning in inns, and his descriptions of these mark him a successor of Fielding. His two years' stay in a solicitor's office is the source of his brilliant gallery of lawyer portraits. The everyday life of humble people, their toil, distresses, enmities, volubilities, and diet, the background and atmosphere of their dwellings, are set forth with amazing vividness. He suffuses the grey and desolate realism of Crabbe with the warm colours of humour and pathos. He is always prone to force the note; none of his characters deliver themselves quite like men of this world; but whereas characters like Mrs. Gamp, Micawber, Pecksniff, Gradgrind, Peggotty, Gargery, and the Wellers are over-emphasised in the manner of Ben Jonson's "humours," they are at least a sublimation of truth; while figures such as Monk in *Oliver Twist*, and Steerforth are drawn from the outside and we have no interest in them; like his plots, with their lost wills, murders, and kidnappings, and some of his descriptions of the pathos of unmerited suffering, they are theatrical, a strain in Dickens which played him false in many ways. He was too ready to sacri-

Dickens

fice probability to a situation; hence, a too persistent use of coincidence. His casual and hurried method of printing monthly parts no doubt affected the construction of his stories, as it did Thackeray's, for the worse; for, though they are crowded with incident, only rarely do they unfold themselves by an inner necessity; in this matter, his historical novels *Barnaby Rudge*, 1841, and *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859, stand a little apart. He sometimes allowed his artistic conscience to be overborne by concurrence with the standards of his audience; and he did not always succeed in raising his splendidly generous hatreds of child drudgery, religious hypocrisy, legal fraud, tyrannical schools, and debtors' prisons from the rank of propaganda to that of art. But, whatever his defects, there remain his abounding vitality, human sympathy, irresistible farcical fun, immense widening of the boundaries of fiction and humour, represented in five or six of his best stories, say *The Pickwick Papers*, 1837–9, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1840, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 1843, *David Copperfield*, 1849–50, *Great Expectations*, 1860–1, and the Christmas books.

Thackeray

In William Makepeace Thackeray, 1811–63, the world portrayed, the art of portraying, and the temper of the novelist are widely different from those of Dickens. Thackeray's is the world of the upper classes, of clubs, professions, London society with its more sophisticated, less open expression. His sense of character in his greater works, *Vanity Fair*, 1847–8, *Pendennis*, 1849-50, *Henry Esmond*, 1852, *The Newcomes*, 1854–5, is marvellously sure; Becky Sharp, Arthur

Pendennis, the Major, Harry Foker, Esmond, Beatrix, Lady Castlewood, Colonel Newcome, all are creations original, perfectly sustained and finished; his apprehension of social atmosphere and relations and his management of episodes are equally unerring. It is a world not of heroes—most of his attractive characters have a strain of pathetic feebleness in them—but of widespread generous qualities. There is, no doubt, an interpolation of unimpressive moralising which obtrudes itself irritatingly upon his art, and a running comment of potent ridicule or sharp irony; but this does not affect the truth of his vision, though it may, for a time, conceal the balance, sanity, and true gentleness of the writer's character. The cynical tone of *Vanity Fair* softens in successive books until, in *The Newcomes*, it becomes a tender melancholy which, in the death of the colonel, expresses, with fine imaginative restraint, intense emotion on the most common of human occasions. His stories are not well composed, having rather the uncalculated episodic succession of life, just as they have its curiously fascinating blend of bitter and sweet. Some hold *Esmond* to be his masterpiece; it is an astonishing, sympathetic re-creation of the life of Queen Anne's day, taking full advantage of a magnificent opportunity; perhaps the delicacy and strength of Thackeray's disposition are best shown in the solution of the difficult æsthetic and moral problems inherent in the tale. Besides these major works, he wrote much in the nature of journalism, burlesque, and extravaganza, *The Yellow-plush Papers*, *Barry Lyndon*, with its fine incisive touch, *Codlingsby*, a parody of Disraeli, *The English Humour-*

ists (who are chosen from his favourite eighteenth century), and the delightful *Roundabout Papers*. Throughout, he expresses himself in an easy, limpid, unmannered, accomplished style.

George Eliot

In the case of George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), 1819–80, as in many others of her time, ancestral faith failed and she fell back upon a "religion of humanity"; she is almost the only philosophically trained mind among the English novelists. Her philosophy is at once her strength and her weakness; for, on the one hand, it enabled her, along with her sympathy, her fine "intelligence of the heart," to pierce through the single action and indicate its universal significance and its attachments for common humanity. On the other hand, the tendency to abstraction grew upon her in her later, drier novels, *Felix Holt*, 1866, and *Daniel Deronda*, 1876. Her recollections of people closely attached to the farms, inns, and towns of the midlands by birth, breeding, and religious tradition, with their narrow outlook, shrewd homely humour, domestic pride, views of duty, marriage, and the like, formed the staple of her surest art, and found their liveliest expression in *Adam Bede*, 1859, *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860, the classically constructed *Silas Marner*, 1861, and *Middlemarch*, 1871–2. Her own intense emotional experience made her portray life as, on the whole, a grim affair, especially for her women characters; but these earlier novels have the relief of penetrating humour and observation, as we may see in the cases of the Tulliver aunts and Mrs. Poyser. Like Dickens and Thackeray, she also essayed the historical novel in *Romola*, 1863, a tale of Savonarola and Florence.

The novel was also the form of expression chosen by the Brontës, Charlotte and Emily, untamed spirits cribbed and confined on the edge of the Yorkshire moors. *Wuthering Heights*, 1848, Emily's single novel (she also wrote some piercing verse), gives a picture of undisciplined characters, of passion sometimes exalted, sometimes ferocious, which are well sorted with "the shrewd bleak soil" and the wild moods of nature, portrayed often with an eerie suggestion of the supernatural.

Emily Brontë

Charlotte's stories, *Jane Eyre*, 1847, and *Villette*, 1852, based on her own history, and *Shirley*, 1849, based on her sister Emily's, are less forbidding, though mostly devoid of humour and marred by overstrained elements as in the case of the maniac's wife in *Jane Eyre*. But she had a subtle sense of the working of women's passions; the sufferings and rewards of love in women of commonplace appearance are her central concern; by the light of her own experience and intuitions, she makes an open and outspoken revelation of the heart with what Swinburne calls the "occult inexplicable force of nature." She has, too, in *Villette*, some powerful strokes of satire. With her may be named Mrs. Gaskell, whose biography of Charlotte is a masterpiece, as is also *Cranford*, 1853, a finely detailed picture of a quiet rural society whose surface is ruffled by small and charming adventures; like Miss Mitford's *Our Village*, 1824–32, *Cranford* has a delicate feminine grace and light humorous observation. The unfinished *Wives and Daughters* is the best of Mrs. Gaskell's other novels (*Mary Barton*, *Sylvia's Lovers*), but, though they have more modern and more tragic

Charlotte Brontë

substance, they never recover the perfect art of *Cranford.*

These are the major names; there remain to be merely catalogued before we close this record of the novel with Stevenson and Meredith, Disraeli's brilliant political stories *Coningsby*, 1844, *Sybil*, 1845, and *Tancred*, 1847; historical novels, such as *The Last Days of Pompeii*, of Bulwer-Lytton; the propaganda stories of Charles Reade, such as *Hard Cash*, 1863, and his one masterpiece, the full and vivid medieval story, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, 1861; fluent and pleasing sketches of cathedral-city character and humour in Trollope's Barchester series; the breezy Smollett-like yarns of Marryat; pictures of the stage Irishman as in Lover's *Handy Andy*, and Lever's *Charles O'Malley;* Kingsley's novel of Elizabethan seamen and Spanish new-world treachery in *Westward Ho!* 1855, and his delineations of social distress in *Yeast*, and *Alton Locke;* we must also chronicle *Lorna Doone*, Blackmore's great romance of Exmoor; and almost the chief of travel-books, unless Kinglake's *Eothen*, 1844, should challenge the title, Borrow's *Bible in Spain*, 1843, together with his novels *Lavengro*, 1851, and *The Romany Rye*, 1857. In these works, autobiography, a vivid sense of open-air life and adventure, and intimate gypsy lore blend with an arresting brilliance and tang of style. The open air is the native habitat, also, of Richard Jefferies, as in his *Wild Life in a Southern County*, 1879, a successor to Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne*, 1789, and a forerunner of a large and attractive modern literature in which a writer deals with such aspects of bird-, ani-

Minor Novelists

mal-, insect-, or plant-life, as may fall within the range of his own close observation.

Development of the novel

The kinds of novel are numerous, and the boundaries between them are easily obscured; but the general currents are clear. The eighteenth century novel began, in Fielding and Richardson, in the fashion of realism. The novelists of terror and Sir Walter Scott widened the range of the novel by the introduction of romance and history; in Scott's wake follow all the historical novelists and the romancers of the "sword and cloak" school; the one genius in this company is R. L. Stevenson. Jane Austen upholds the realistic tradition; but while, in Fielding and Smollett, the typical background is that of travel, Jane Austen keeps within the domestic circle that she knew from her own experience. Dickens and Thackeray also maintain the realistic tradition, though the worlds they portray are widely different, and though both attempted the historical novel as well. To the women novelists, George Eliot and the Brontës, we owe, in all probability, a deeper strain of introspection in character, a closer psychological enquiry, and a more open expression of passionate moods. Novels of propaganda have rarely attained the highest rank, though both Dickens and Charles Reade made trial of them. The work of Samuel Butler, Thomas Hardy, and George Meredith has two interests; firstly, it illustrates the resolute and exact temper of science at work in fiction; secondly, it puts upon the novelist of our day the obligation to approach life with an implicit "metaphysic," that is to say, with a comprehensive judgment of the worth of life. Meredith

speaks reassuringly and optimistically on this subject; Hardy sees man in the grip of an ironic destiny. Hardy is also the novelist who has most powerfully used the motive of the hereditary claims of the soil and atmosphere of a man's birthplace.

R. L. Stevenson

We may take Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850–94, as the representative of the romantic novelists; he is a chronicler of adventure, mystery, and surprise; sometimes he sets his tale in remote ages and places, as in *The Black Arrow*, 1888; but, for the most part, he is inspired by the memory and spell of Scottish scenes, "the cold old huddle of grey hills" of his native country; the eighteenth century is the period of the Scottish tales, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona*, and *Weir of Hermiston*. This last unfinished book, a torso in granite, leaves the impression of irresistible power in its chief character, going blindly to work and driving towards inevitable tragedy. Things gruesome and malignant are the themes of some of his short stories, as in his brilliant psychological fantasy *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. His essays *Virginibus Puerisque*, *Memories and Portraits*, and *Across the Plains*, are in the wake of Hazlitt; they have not the earlier writer's pungency and force, but they are wider-travelled and have a more engaging temper and humour; the delightful *Letters* are of the same order. He first won his spurs in *Treasure Island*, 1882, which gives amazing definiteness to boyish imaginings of piracy and is the classic of its kind; something of the same imaginative insight into the child-mind marks his *Child's Garden of Verse*. It used to be the fashion to call Stevenson's style artificial or precious; it was the fruit of constant and

assiduous labour, and is a little mannered; it has, nevertheless, lucidity, buoyancy, and humour in a remarkable degree.

George Meredith

George Meredith, 1828–1909, takes his figures from the surviving feudalism of England and from the world between the commons and the peers. He found in the classes of high rank and deep-rooted tradition, in which the best of the men are natural rulers, though they may not be great thinkers, and the best of the women are leisured, cultured, vital, and witty, the scene and matter of his art. The appendages of such a world—scholars, tutors, solicitors, yeomen, cricketers, prize-fighters, and the rather luridly portrayed *demi-monde*—vary and enrich the scene; while the incalculable shifts of those who hover hankeringly at the boundaries of the set provide the theme of exquisite high comedy, as in *Evan Harrington*, 1861. The characters are often brought together in spacious country houses; such a company as the brothers of Sir Austin Feverel may remind us of Peacock's assemblies of intellectual humourists; Peacockian, too, are the lavish praises of wine and scholarship; but there is nothing in Peacock to compare with the strong-shouldered, competent, game-winning Redworth, in *Diana of the Crossways*. Meredith has an acute sense of the conventions of caste and his tragedies are connected, though not always directly, with defiances of them by characters in the earlier novels, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, 1859, and *Rhoda Fleming*, 1865. The later books, *One of Our Conquerors*, 1891, *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, and *The Amazing Marriage*, 1895, are less concerned with caste than

with rebellions against the tyranny of the marriage bond. Meredith is more than a mere showman of his world in action; with penetrating and ramifying insight, he tracks the dubious courses of emotion, desire, conflicts of will with reason or convention or authority. He portrays, with Shakespearean delicacy, the quick pulse and unflawed beauty of a first passion in Richard Feverel; love but the ghost of a passion in Dacier in *Diana;* egoism masquerading as love in Sir Willoughby Patterne; and he is equally authoritative on friendship and patriotism. We do not go to him for narrative—though there are sketches of swift and exciting incident, such as that of Carinthia and the mad dog in *The Amazing Marriage*—but for analysis; he is the surgeon of the social body, whose diagnosis, made with sure intuition and consummate craft, commands our acquiescence. Complexity is necessary to the full display of his skill; the minute exhibition of this complexity may account, in part, for the excesses in diction which may be justly charged against him. These are not quite the same as faults of over-compression of thought; the brilliance and sparkle of epigram, the deft counterstrokes of wit, the criticial reflections, which make the reading of *Diana* a pleasing mental excitement, become too oracular and descend in too bewildering a shower in the later books. He is more than psychologist and analyst; he is an ironist, choosing his point of view and uttering his comment as the instrument of the comic spirit. His keenest shafts are reserved not for humanity at large, for he is an optimist; but for vanity, egoism, sentimentalism, and rigid formularism; his surest aim is taken in *The Egoist*, 1879;

but all his prose is shot through with irony, the method of which, and its great literary prototypes, are set out in the incomparable *Essay on the Comic Spirit*. *Beauchamp's Career*, 1875, is the only novel he wrote whose development is determined by English political ideas. Meredith seems to rise into an ampler air on broader pinions, to view a larger panorama, in *Emilia in England*, 1864, and *Vittoria*, 1866, where the almost epical matter is the strife between Austria and Italy, and where he creates his supreme woman figure, the artist and patriot Emilia. To the novels, there has recently, 1912, been added the rich treasury of counsel, wit, and criticism contained in his *Letters*.

4. History, Criticism, and Science, 1830–1900

Carlyle

Thomas Carlyle, 1795–1881, unites the functions of man of letters, historian, and prophet. His earlier essays are divided between the interests of German romance and such biographical subjects as Burns, Samuel Johnson, and Voltaire. With *Sartor Resartus*, 1834, a faintly veiled autobiography centring about the spiritual new birth which he owed largely to Goethe, come into play his "philosophico-poetical" thought and his teeming psalmodic style. His first large historical work was *The French Revolution*, 1837, the most brilliant of all, pictorially, whether in characters like Mirabeau and Danton, or in vivid scenes such as the fall of the Bastille, the flight to Varennes, or the death of Louis XVI. His doctrine that history is the biography of great men (the basis, also, of his lectures, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 1840) is more fully developed in *Cromwell's*

Letters and Speeches, 1845, which swiftly reversed the national verdict of generations; and in *Frederick the Great*, 1858–65, the work which made the largest tax on his mental energies and nervous resources. These compositions precede the modern school in their methods of research, though they exemplify Carlyle's untiring industry. He was no single-minded historian, for he sought to show how the age might best manage its affairs, to be prophet and poet as well as recorder. The prophetic and sometimes dyspeptic strain becomes more rife in *Chartism*, 1839, *Past and Present*, 1843, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 1850, and *Shooting Niagara*, 1867; this last is his only writing of any length after the death of his brilliant but unhappy wife in 1866. Shorn of their volcanic eloquence and graphic splendours, his precepts are two, a mystic philosophy and hard work. His mysticism, like the Earth Spirit in Goethe's *Faust*, resolves the visible universe into the mere vesture of eternal mind; urged by this thought, Carlyle assails the materialism and luxury of his "sceptico-epicurean" generation. On the other hand, he conceived of action and toil as the only sources of bodily and spiritual health, the only solvents of doubt and misery; he had nothing but withering scorn for the expedients of ballot-boxes, Reform Bills, the dismal sciences of economics and evolution, and the "Hebrew old clothes" of orthodox religious belief (on this, see the *Life of Sterling*). He came to worship force, which he too easily assumed to be identical with righteousness. His prejudices and antagonisms and a certain ferocity of expression render him an untrustworthy critic of his time, and he oftener saw the truth in some lightning flash of intui-

tion, than in the processes of philosophising; yet, something of the incalculable moral influence which Goethe forecast that he would wield may be seen in Tennyson, Dickens, Ruskin, and Browning. His style, whether ruggedly colloquial or majestically eloquent, has a teeming wealth of idiom, graphic force, saturnine humour ("grisly laughter," Meredith called it), above all, unparalleled inventiveness of phrase and imagery. Carlyle defines it himself in the chapter "Characteristics" in *Sartor Resartus*.

Macaulay and Froude

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1800–59, and James Anthony Froude, 1818–94, are also of the school of pictorial historians; both are modern in the wide range of research, though both are justly charged with faults, Macaulay with partisanship and advocacy, Froude with inaccuracies. Both were probably men of too strong prejudices to write impartially, if, indeed, that is ever possible. Both have added imperishable pictures to the gallery of history; Froude (who makes Henry VIII into a Carlylean hero) describes the Protestant struggle with the Papacy in Tudor times, with much illumination from Spanish sources; Macaulay describes the beginning of the Whig supremacy in 1688. Macaulay's extraordinarily voluminous reading and tenacious memory enabled him to summon illustrative material for every contingency, to fill his scenes with picturesque and convincing detail, set in relief by his brilliant, though rather metallic, expression, with short arresting sentences and antithetic clauses deftly wrought into the large fabric of the paragraph. He writes in his *History of England*, 1848–55, like an orator, with strong, sometimes vio-

lent effects, splendid narrative power, and fine emotional response to heroic deeds and names, just the things which, in fact, inspire his *Armada*, and *The Lays of Ancient Rome*. He is rather typical of Victorian "respectability" and contentment; he has not much subtlety or speculative gift, but he has all the sagacity and judgment which come of acquaintance with affairs. Much the same may be said of his *Essays*, which excel in the illustrative and historical aspects, though there is penetrating criticism in such an essay as that on Addison.

Mention should be made of Grote and Thirlwall, historians of Greece; of Thomas Arnold, historian of Rome; of Hallam, historian of the Middle Ages; they furthered in various ways the science of history; but we may think of Stubbs as the first representative of the modern school of history intent on minutely examining and elucidating documents before slowly and surely re-erecting—on the immovable basis of knowledge, without the loose mortar of conjecture, the false perspective of partisanship and the needless decoration of rhetoric—the edifice of man's past.

Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold, 1822–88, like Ruskin and Carlyle, is a critic of contemporary life, but his most effective range is in the criticism of literature. He stood firmly as an opponent of "stock romanticism" on the ground of its self-will, eccentricity, violation of restraint, and proportion, want of the unity which comes of a clearly grasped central subject, its general lack of what Greece might teach us. He sought to formulate new standards; he had a keener sense of the varied beauties of literature than the *a priori* critics of the eighteenth

century, but his bent is still towards ethical aspects, "the criticism of life," and his method is the application of preconceived tests. He is apt to make use of catchwords: "sweetness and light," "higher truth and seriousness," "the grand style," though he is not vague about them, never shrinking from definition. From the critic he demands disinterestedness, knowledge, and justness of spirit. These sane and lofty canons are applied to many topics in his *Essays in Criticism*, 1865, *Mixed Essays*, 1879, *On Translating Homer*, 1861, and in other books. Yet, perhaps his largest service was the suggestion of the comparative method, which should bring an enlightened knowledge of European literature to bear in judging any great work; he left it to later critics to enforce the historical point of view as well. His criticisms of the English social order were directed against its deficiencies in large ideas, and in the power (which he believed the French possessed) of applying them freshly and freely; and against philistinism and routine thinking. The wittiest of these writings is his *Friendship's Garland*, 1871; his excursions in theology were less authoritative. His style has lucidity, urbanity, piquancy, and, though rather full of reiteration, shows a sense of buoyancy denied to his graver verse.

Ruskin

John Ruskin, 1819–1900, began, in his *Modern Painters*, 1843–60, as critic and expositor of art. He was an apostle of beauty, and shared the predilection of the pre-Raphaelites for the sensitive colouring of early renascence art. He had other enthusiasms—for Turner's landscapes, for medieval architecture (the chapter in *The Stones of Venice*, on "The Nature of Gothic" sets forth his

doctrine that the inspiration to work should be found in the soul of man), and for all the pageantry of sky, sea, Alps, plains, rocks, and trees with their colours, surfaces, and textures. He went voluminously into the abstract problems of art, and his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849 (which are Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, Obedience), indicates his ethical bent. About 1850, he came definitely under the influence of Carlyle, whom he revered as "master." Henceforth, though he never abandoned art, his criticism and thought were directed towards economics and sociology, which he sought to humanise as he sought also to stir the utilitarian and commercial age to some protest against its own ugliness and cruelty. In volumes such as *Unto this Last*, 1862, *Sesame and Lilies*, 1865, and the autobiographical *Fors Clavigera* and *Præterita*, though some of his theories may be whimsical and some of his enthusiasms unbalanced, it is clear that Carlyle's prophetic mantle descended to a spirit kindred in sincerity of conviction, moral urgency, belief in the natural order as the expression of the Divine Mind—as well as in a certain imperious dogmatism of statement. His style is masterly, lucid, and delightful; his long periods are marvellously harmonious and rhythmical, his diction opulent to a degree; his achievement in style is the more remarkable since he writes a modern prose; the Ciceronian tradition, in which De Quincey is still steeped, has passed away. Wherever his judgment and thought and feeling are of the quality of his craft of expression, we may hail Ruskin as the grand master of English prose of the ornate kind.

Of many critics since Ruskin we may name as a

representative of scholarship Mark Pattison; and of æsthetics J. A. Symonds. Oscar Wilde illustrates the decline from æstheticism to decadence, but his *Intentions* is of worth in respect of its rare insight, witty paradox, and beautifully finished prose. Walter Pater, 1839–94, may stand as representative of those literary descendants of Ruskin, who are quite untouched by the ethics of Ruskin; he is a lover of strange beauty. Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, with its baffling union of diverse qualities and remote suggestions, is the subject of a famous passage in *Pater's Studies in the History of the Renaissance;* at the close of the same book, he unfolded the ideal of being "present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in the purest energies," and of "art for its own sake." "For art comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." This sophisticated and over-subtle sense of beauty found its ideals less in Greece than in Rome, as we may judge from *Marius the Epicurean*, 1885, and in the renascence period of Montaigne as we may judge from *Gaston de Latour*, 1896. *Appreciations*, 1889, is his fullest body of critical pronouncements, and its opening essay on "Style" proves him a pupil of Flaubert and a devotee of the *mot propre*. In this spirit, he aims at writing an artist's prose, the words pregnant by their choice and association, delicately inlaid, suggestive by their juxtaposition of light and shade, surprising and exciting the reader by unexpected felicities of rhythm. In this studied art, he has no equal. This brief survey of the progress of criticism must close with the

Walter Pater

reminder that criticism is constantly becoming more comprehensive and more complex. Sainte-Beuve introduced the method of psychological estimate and minute study of environment; other lines of its advance are the historical method, in one direction, and, in another, the comparative; in this last direction, French scholars have, up to the present, led the way.

Economics, theology, science

We have not much concern with these matters except so far as they become the subjects of high and noble expression; we cannot do more than note the succession of books which established and developed the utilitarian philosophy (which stirred Carlyle's wrath), from the great codifier Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1780, to John Stuart Mill's more human and sympathetic *Liberty*, 1859, and *Utilitarianism*, 1863. His *System of Logic*, 1843, touches the science of thought and is in the empirical tradition of Locke and Hume. Economics is the theme of a vast literature, from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, 1776 (providing a theory for industrialism, out of which grew the *laissez-faire* school of free competition), through Ricardo and Malthus to Ruskin and the later scientific economists. Nearly allied is Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, 1857, a large, stimulating, though not always convincing, study of the general laws of development of the English state.

Newman

The tractarians troubled thought much, but literature little, except in the case of John Henry Newman, 1801–90; with the precise cast of his dogma and his grounds for passing over to the Roman church we are uncon-

cerned. In his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, 1864, his intense personality sets his graceful scholarly periods aglow with an impassioned defence of principles, the fruit of long-sifted thought and acute spiritual need. Some of the finest ideals of knowledge and culture find consummate expression in his *Idea of a University*, 1854, where his style, as in the best of his *Plain and Parochial Sermons*, blends precision, charm, and eloquence in a fashion unparalleled in the nineteenth century.

Science

It is inevitable that the last words of this book should deal, however briefly, with science; though science, in the main, still awaits its transmutation in the alembic of style. We can only name the direct, unpretending prose of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, 1859; the solid industry and ambitious synthesis of Spencer's *First Principles*, 1862, and *Principles of Biology*, 1864–7; the controversial eagerness and vivid epigrammatic speech of Huxley's *Essays*. But these are enough to show that the advent of science—like the renascence three hundred years before—has shaken the whole universe of thought; it admits no compromise in its pursuit of truth, and its sway is widening in all the provinces of man's endeavour. Since literature must remain firmly planted in one or another kind of experience, it is bound to take up into itself more and more of the forms and principles and ideals with which science is impregnating the soil of all human activities.

APPENDIX

THE following table presents the plays of Shakespeare in approximately chronological order. Many of the dates depend upon inference and conjecture and the whole arrangement must be regarded as provisional.

The letter M following twelve of the plays signifies that those plays are mentioned in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, 1598.

The third column gives the dates of all the known quarto editions before 1623. All the plays mentioned were printed in the first folio (1623), with the exception of *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The date 1623 in the fourth column simply indicates that in those cases the earliest extant version of the play is in the first folio (1623).

The later folios are the second (1632), with Milton's verses; the third (1663) reissued in 1664 with *Pericles;* and the fourth (1685).

Date	*Play*	Quartos	Folio
c. 1591–3? (revised 1597)	*Love's Labour's Lost* M	Q 1598	
c. 1591–3?	*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* M		1623
c. 1591–3? also played Gray's Inn, 1594	*The Comedy of Errors* M		1623
c. 1591? revised later, 1595?	*Romeo and Juliet* M	Qq surreptitious 1597, authentic 1599 and 1609	

Date	*Play*	Quartos	Folio
c. 1592?	*Henry VI, part i*		1623
[1] c. 1592?	*Henry VI, part ii*		1623
[2] c. 1592?	*Henry VI, part iii*		1623
1593–4?	*Richard III* M	Qq 1597, 1598, 1602, 1605, 1612, 1622	
1594?	*Richard II* M	Qq 1597, 1598, 1608, and 1615	
[3] 1593–4	*Titus Andronicus* M	Qq 1594, 1600, and 1611	
1594?	*The Merchant of Venice* M	2 quartos in 1600	
1594?	*King John* M		1623
1595?	*A Midsummer Night's Dream* M	2 quartos in 1600	
[4] 1595–6?	*The Taming of the Shrew*		1623
1596?	*All's Well that Ends Well* (if identical with Meres's *Love's Labour's Won;* but possibly later)		1623
1597	*Henry IV, part i* M	Qq 1598, 1599, 1604, 1608, 1613, 1622	
1597	*Henry IV, part ii*	Q 1600	
1598?	*The Merry Wives of Windsor*	Qq 1602 imperfect, and 1619	
1599	*Henry V*	Qq 1600 imperfect, 1602, 1608	
1599?	*Much Ado about Nothing*	Q 1600	
1600?	*As You Like It*		1623
1600–1 also acted 1602	*Twelfth Night*		1623

[1] In 1594 was printed *The first part of the Contention betwixt the two famous houses of Yorke and Lancaster.* This is not Shakespearean; but it is the basis of the play which is printed in F. 1623 as Henry VI, part ii.

[2] In 1595 was printed *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the death of Good King Henry Sixt.* This is not Shakespearean; but is the basis of F. 1623, Henry VI, part iii.

[3] Authorship disputed.

[4] Adapted from *The Taming of a Shrew* printed in 1594.

Date	*Play*	Quartos	Folio
1601?	*Julius Cæsar*		1623
1602	*Hamlet*	Qq 1603 imperfect; also 1604 and 1611	
1603?	*Troilus and Cressida*	Q 1609	
1604	*Othello*	Q 1622	
1604	*Measure for Measure*		1623
1605–6	*King Lear*	2 quartos 1608	
1606	*Macbeth*		1623
1607	*Timon of Athens* (in part)		1623
1607	*Pericles* (in part)	Qq mangled form 1609; 1611 and 1619. In folio 1664, not in folio 1623	
1608	*Antony and Cleopatra*		1623
1608–9	*Coriolanus*		1623
1610–11	*Cymbeline*		1623
1610–11	*The Winter's Tale*		1623
1611	*The Tempest*		1623
1612	*The Two Noble Kinsmen* (in part)	Q 1634, not in folio 1623	
1613?	*Henry VIII* (in part)		1623

Recent researches seem to indicate that the following quartos in the above lists bear fictitious dates, and were actually printed in 1619. In each case the quarto affected is the one without the printer's address.

A Midsummer Night's Dream	Q	1600
The Merchant of Venice	Q	1600
Henry V	Q	1608
King Lear	Q	1608

Vide Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos.*

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NOTE. *Italic figures indicate the principal references. Dates of the plays of Shakespeare are given in the Appendix.*

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